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AMERICAN EYE

Sometimes Called "Little England", Barbados Is the Most Easterly of the Windward Islands

We walked through the lobby, and I picked up the morning *Advocate-News*. "Today's Hurricane Hint: Be Prepared: The Hurricane Season is here. Have a small supply of tinned milk and other Canned Foods in your house as emergency rations." There are no clouds in the sky and the heat is wet and heavy in the dining room where the shutters are down and small, gray birds that look like sparrows are picking at toast crumbs and fluttering about just out of the reach of waiters.

"In Barbados, small birds eat right off your breakfast table," she said. "That's what the travel agent told us."

"Look." The bird perched on the rim of the sugar bowl, pecking with a kind of spastic jerk in the brown sugar. A pink lump the size of a marble on its neck forced the bird to hold its head at an angle.

"Sometimes in Barbados, sick birds eat right off your breakfast table," she said.

Bridgetown is four miles away. Even at nine in the morning, the sun is hot, a weight on your shoulders and neck. The walk from Blue Waters Beach to the statue of Lord Nelson in Trafalgar Square is along a twisting road lined with villas named after flowers and girls, pastel villas with open grated entrances and sometimes black children peering through the windows eating bananas. Then the Bay Villa on the beach side, six stories, each apartment with its own patio and a gift shop with a sign on the door, AIR CONDITIONED.

"I'm hot." She folded her parasol. "Let's buy postcards and send them to people. Let's send a postcard to Margaret Hart."

Back outside the gift shop, the heat seems heavier and the street narrows. There are no sidewalks and we walked in the narrow street warily with British made automobiles and delivery trucks and mini mokes and buses speeding around the curves, honking at intervals, perhaps before they enter each curve, coming close to us, causing her to walk behind me because two abreast seems dangerous. "In Barbados it is polite for drivers to honk at each curve in the street," the brochure had said. There are children playing in the yards of the villas and they stare at us quietly. They do not wave or even smile, only stare. There are old women squatting beside the road with trays piled with bananas and mangoes and what look like green grapes. The women point to the fruit as we pass, but they do not speak to us. Once, a long while ago I was in Dacca and later Bangkok—Bangkok, ah youth—and the heat was the same as here and the children and the squatting vendors looked the same and even sometimes the buildings, though perhaps the people not as dark as here though maybe prettier there, and there the children ran out begging for gifts and they followed you and the vendors yelled at you and old maimed beggars showed you their wounds and the children offered to sell you their sisters, and thinking of those things I said, "People are awfully quiet here. I wonder why everyone is so quiet."

A mini moke went by, honking.

We go past a concrete shell of a building on the bay side, two and a half stories under construction with black workmen in yellow hard hats mixing cement, carrying length of pipe and calling to other black workmen up above. We stand and watch and the workmen don't look at her, won't look directly at her but maybe only at her feet, and she stands with the parasol against the sun reading the sign in front of the shell that says

NEW HIGH RISE LUXURY HOTEL
ON THIS SITE.
FIVE STORIES OF MODERN
TOURIST APARTMENTS
EACH WITH ITS OWN VIEW OF THE SEA.
BARBADOS MOVES FORWARD!

Another turn in the road and the Garrison Savannah with the barracks

---

BERTRAND RUSSELL
1872-1970

We that have done and thought,
That have thought and done,
Must ramble, and thin out
Like milk spilt on a stone.

—*W. B. Yeats*

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on the left, a concrete strip to their right where half a dozen men are riding motorcycles back and forth in figure eight patterns, practicing some colorful Indies mechanized public ritual perhaps. In the field boys are playing soccer. A ball arches in the sky and I can see the boy under it set himself and then jump, jerking his head as it meets the ball with a kind of rubbery snap.

A lane leads off the road to the left on a piece of land that juts into the sea with an arrow and a sign BARBADOS HOLIDAY INN. "It's hot. Let's stop. Do you want some ice tea?"

In the courtyard four or five tall handsome black boys in Gilbert and Sullivan middie blouses and bloomered slacks and white straw boaters stand talking.

There are plate glass windows and Disney-like walks with neptune symbols poured into the concrete and a swimming pool with a trident painted on the bottom and a man scrubbing what might be vomit from the walk that tops a pier going out into the bay. Some boats with colored flags are tied to the pier. We turn right and enter the dining room where the air is dry and very cool and a smiling head waiter in a Gilbert and Sullivan middie says we can't have tea there but we should go to the bar, it's just down the walk beyond those rounded buildings with thatched roofs. We go towards the bar and in a half wall of one of the thatched gazebos, behind a glass window, is a black leather bikini on a plastic torso. A small sign underneath the crotch says that this item may be purchased at the gift shop duty free. The Holiday Inn is a maze of paths and thatch and glass walls and I look up and there across the bay, beyond the flags and the walk to the pier, far out in the bay on another jut of land is the BARBADOS HILTON, looking something like the Saint Louis airport terminal, rounded and tall, glistening in the sun, remote, huge, inaccessible, floating out there in the heat, unbelievable.

"I'll bet there aren't sick birds in the dining room at the Hilton," she said. "I don't like the Holiday Inn."

"I'm not thirsty anyway, are you?"

"I never was thirsty. Let's go on down town."

Back on the street, no more villas. Now mostly wooden shops with fronts solid against the street and inside citizens talking and drinking things, counters piled with fruit and vegetables, the smell of charcoal. Around another curve now walking side by side on the sidewalk across from Harry's Bar.

HARRY'S NITERY
THIS NITERY OPENS AT 9 PM
TOURISTS ONLY
THEY COME BY BOAT.
THEY COME BY AIRPLANE.
THEY COME BY BALLOON.
BUT ALL OVER THE CARIBBEAN
EVERYONE COMES TO HARRY'S NITERY.
MENTIONED IN A REUTERS
DISPATCH ON CENSORING

We stand and read the signs in front of Harry's. It is a two story building with a balcony, inside, very dim, a chandelier with what might be glass drops, the whole building flimsy, the entrance through a door in a board fence to the left that appears to open into a courtyard.

"I read an article about Harry's Bar in some magazine. Some woman wrote it. She said she came to Barbados just to go to Harry's and they wouldn't let her in when she got here."

"Why not?" she said.

"I don't know why they wouldn't let her in. She said a few years later she met another woman in New Zealand or someplace like that and that woman had been in Harry's and she said the floor show was all Lesbians."

"Would that interest you? I mean, would you like to see Lesbians in a floor show?"

"I don't know. This woman said all the Lesbians were about sixty years old. That doesn't sound too great." We talked standing there on the narrow sidewalk under her parasol and people went by us, black children eating grapes and black old women with baskets balanced on their heads and black young men, some snapping their fingers and singing to themselves. No one spoke to us, and the young men didn't look at her, only maybe at her feet, and the children stared but were quiet. They all stepped off the sidewalk into the street to get by us and the buses and the automobiles coming around the curve honked politely at them.

Across Victoria Bridge which spans the careenage just by the bus terminal men sat playing checkers in the little park. They look down as we pass to go by the fountain and the statue of Lord Nelson, across from the post office and the public buildings. We walked slowly, tired, and her parasol got in the way of people coming towards us on the narrow sidewalk beside the Royal Bank of Canada and I told her to close the parasol even though the people seemed not to notice, only moving carefully aside so as not to jostle us or it.

In the middle of the street, just by DaCostas, was a huge muscular policeman in a Gilbert and Sullivan with a brilliant red sash directing traffic. He puts up a hand and stops the taxis and push carts and we cross Broad Street to the Advocate Stationery.

"Let's buy something to read," she said. "Let's buy Mazo de la Roche." There, next to a rack of magazines, is a rack of de la Roche, maybe everything Mazo ever wrote, *Jalna, The Building of Jalna, Morning at Jalna, The Master of Jalna, Return to Jalna, Variable Winds at Jalna, Centenary at Jalna*, even *Finch's Fortune*. In the back of the store, in a dim room with a sign PHONOGRAPH swinging from the ceiling, a girl is playing phonograph records. First "The Sloop John B." and then "Yellow Bird".

"Sure, buy some." I picked up a copy of *Bajan* that looked exactly like a copy of *Time Magazine*. "It is estimated that whereas tourist spending is as much as 89 percent of the Antiguan national income, in Barbados it is 47 percent," said *Bajan*. "Because it costs over $1000 US for a family of four to fly to the East Caribbean most of the market will be upper middle income groups capable of paying $80 US per day without strain."

"What did you say?" she said.

"I said the bird imagery in "Yellow Bird" is neat, and I think I'll buy a copy of *Bim*. This one has an article called 'Negro New World Religions

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and Witchcraft'. That ought to be worth reading, and listen to this. 'This issue marks the completion of our twelfth volume. *Bim* first appeared in December 1942, and, except for occasional lapses, has since been published twice a year. In this number E. L. Jimmy Cozier, who, if not the 'onlie begetter' of the magazine, was at least its prime originator, traces the story of its birth and development.' That ought to be worth one dollar, bee wee."

Carrying *Bim* and *Variable Winds at Jalna* and the parasol, we left the store and crossed the street. According to the map, if we follow William Henry street for a while it will become Lucas street which will go past the police station to the library. William Henry narrows and becomes a choked lane of pedestrians, people hurrying beside the small shops selling cheap watches and ladies' underwear. The street is full of people, no tourists, only citizens, and the small automobiles honk and push through the press. There is the smell of heat and sweat and rotting mangoes. Muscular black girls in tight, pastel mini skirts laugh together and black old women with gray felt hats on their heads are squatting at the alleys with trays of green bananas in front of them, grinning toothless at the press of people. We walked in the middle of the street, her parasol up again against the weight of the sun, towards the library and it is strangely as if we aren't seen or maybe not even there for no one looks directly at her and no one tries to sell us anything. Through the window of the police station we can see men with shaved heads sitting at desks looking at papers, clerks perhaps, certainly not prisoners, though perhaps the prisoners are farther inside beyond the courtyard that we glimpse as we pass the gates where a Gilbert and Sullivan with a baton in his hand smiles professionally at us and then looks away as we pass.

The library has a green metal fence in front. We went inside.

"I want to show you a poem by Derek Walcott," I said.

The Indies collection is on the second floor. The room is wide and bright with windows on all four sides and some cases for books scattered about, but few books, fewer than you would expect, and *British Books in Print* prominent on a stand and a thick pile of *The London Times* on a table. The girl behind the desk explains the Indies collection is locked up. People steal things. We must take steps, you know, to protect the books. Sometimes the Premier rings up and asks for things. Above her desk is a dusty color photograph of Monticello with a small card beneath reading, "From the people of Virginia to the people of Barbados." Why would the people of Virginia send a big colored photograph to the people of Barbados?

"You may have the book if you use it in the room," the girl said. "But you must sign the slip."

I sign the slip and smile at her, but she looks away and we take the book to the far side of the room where we place the book on the window sill in the sun and stand and read.

ISLANDS

Merely to name them is the prose
Of diarists, to make you a name
For readers who like travellers praise
Their beds and beaches as the same;
But islands can only exist
If we have loved in them. I seek
As climate seeks its style, to write
Verse crisp as sand, clear as sunlight,
Cold as the curled wave, ordinary
As a tumbler of island water;
Yet, like a diarist, thereafter
I savour their salt-haunted rooms,
(Your body stirring the creased sea
Of crumpled sheets), whose mirrors lose
Our huddled, sleeping images,
Like words which love had hoped to use
Erased with the surf's pages . . . .

"Where's the one about the tourist thinking the islanders are happy only they aren't?"

In the evening, crickets making metallic music-like sounds below, the hotel conducts its weekly rumpunch roof party for guests. We stand on the wet cement roof drinking the weak rum punches and the party is all couples, each couple standing alone, forcibly talking to one another, leaning on the cement wall that runs around the roof, looking out at the reflection of the moon on the Caribbean water across the road.

"Do you want to go to Harry's Bar?" she said. "I can go downstairs and read *Variable Winds at Jalna*."

* * *

We walked through the lobby and I picked up the morning *Advocate-News*. "Today's Hurricane Hint: Be Prepared! Remember, hurricane rains are mainly salt water. Cover all outside reservoirs of drinking water well before . . . ."

There are taxis waiting outside the hotel and the drivers are polishing the chrome, standing about talking wiping the hoods of the automobiles drinking Coca-Cola.

"How much to drive us to Bathsheba?" I asked him.

"You want tour of de island, sir?" He looked at me, not at her, and she stood in the sun with her parasol luminous green in the light.

"No, just to Bathsheba. Maybe stop at Welchman Hall Gulley and then come back. Is there someplace in Bathsheba we can eat lunch?"

"Just Bathsheba an back? 'Cross de island?"

"Yes. How long would that take?"

It is decided that the trip will take three hours and it will cost eighteen bee wee dollars. We can have lunch at the Edgewater.

"Weeks, sir," the driver said, shaking my hand.

We sit in the back of the taxi, riding along the street we walked the day before, past the Bay Villa and the barracks.

"Mr. Weeks, do you sometimes take tourist to Harry's Bar."

"I not take tourist to Harry's Bar. Other driver do that but I am Christian and I not take tourist to that place. It is for sailor and person like that. De lady would not like Harry's Bar. You might see thing there make you laugh, but maybe not. I not take tourist to Harry's Bar."

"I only asked, Mr. Weeks."

Honking politely at every bend in the road, Mr. Weeks skilfully takes us out of the city, through the sugar

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ane, now only four months high, past a rock church in a clearing, past one story rectangular houses set on foundations of cement blocks. The sun is bright and hot. Children stand in the yards and stare as we pass, but they do not wave or yell or run after the automobile. There are vertical cement slabs with spigots in their middle beside the road every mile or so and a muscular black man, naked to the waist, is washing his arms under a spigot. He turns his head as we approach.

We stop for a while at Welchman Hall Gulley and look at green monkeys in the trees and listen to a guide who once in 1944 worked on a pea farm in Minnesota tell about exploding impatiens and how the inside of his nut is nutmeg and the outside is mace. Lately, he says, some gentlemen have come to the gulley to shoot the monkeys. The monkeys are destructive, very destructive. It is all right with him if the gentlemen shoot the monkeys, but it would be better if the gentlemen took the carcasses away. They make a very big stink, and the tourists do not like stink in the gulley. No, he says, the tourists do not tear up much of the growth. He knows the Latin names of all of the plants and enjoys our ignorance. "You think you know what this is?" he says, showing a leaf, a berry, a flower. "It is a common household item you use every day." He gives her a nutmeg, and I give him one bee wee dollar.

Back with Mr. Weeks, honking, we come to the crest of a hill and there below, suddenly, through an opening in the cane, the eastern shore of the island with the Atlantic breaking in on a white beach. Weeks stops and we look. Two little black girls in dresses to their calves and wide brimmed hats with flowers on them walk past the automobile, talking, but we cannot hear what they are saying and they do not look at us. There was an open church, a kind of shack, around the curve behind us and inside people, the men in suits and the women in long flowered dresses, had been singing hymns when we passed.

"I guess the girls are going to church," she said.

"It's Sunday. I'd forgotten it's Sunday."

"De people very religious," Mr. Weeks said. "De people all Christian."

I ask him about obeah men. Do people believe in obeah men? obeah women?

"I hear this. I hear that," he said. "Maybe some man give all his money to obeah man. That very foolish." Mr. Weeks does not want to talk about obeah men. We pass another spigot with the water running and an old man, his back to the road, scrubbing his head and face under the water. "De people very clean. De people all de time wash." Mr. Weeks is more comfortable with this subject.

In Bathsheba at the hotel, outside the dining room on the walk leading beside the swimming pool, a large white man is playing the bagpipes, walking up and down, lifting each foot carefully, mechanically, putting each foot down flat in place, blowing. We stand for a while and watch and listen. "Did you know that the drone ground bass which sounds without interruption is the main characteristic of the bagpipe?" she said.

Inside we eat roast pork and fried plantain and look out of the window at the beach far below where the surf is smashing the rocks.

"I don't understand why everybody ignores us. Why do you suppose the children don't yell at us? Why haven't I been propositioned by girls on the street? When I was in Bangkok, things looked a lot like here but . . . ."

"You said all of that yesterday. Bangkok, ah youth." She laughed.

Mr. Weeks is drinking a Coca-Cola and eating a sandwich in the car. He asks if the lunch was good and how much did it cost in there.

"Twenty-five bee wee dollars."

He folds up the sandwich bag and puts it in the glove compartment and takes out a little notebook and writes something in it.

"Is it time go back?" he asked.

"Mr. Weeks, I want to ask you something. I've been in places like Barbados before, tropical places . . . ."

"Ah youth," she said.

"Stop that, for Christ's sake. No, seriously, Mr. Weeks, I can't understand. Why aren't there any beggars and why don't kids bother us for money and why aren't there girls or, you know, kids wanting to sell their sisters and things like that. This gets spooky. I mean, people here don't even look at us."

"That molestin de tourist," he said. "It big crime. On de island, here maybe, there maybe, de secret police. Secret police man, secret police woman. In Bridgetown, you see policeman?"

"You mean the whole island is full of secret police?"

"You see policeman in Bridgetown?"

"Well, there was one directing traffic outside the Advocate, but that's about all."

"You see one, there thousand. Maybe this man, maybe that man, watch see who molest de tourist."

"You mean they watch even little kids?"

"De little boy molest de tourist, secret police take him away, pick him up right here take him work camp. Five years work camp. Den five years dey bring him right back same place and put him down again."

Back at Blue Waters Beach we lay on mats in the sand and read, *Bim* and *The Advocate-News* and *Variable Winds at Jalna*. Behind us, under the trees, a phonograph plays The Mamas and the Papas.

"Listen to this, this morning's *Advocate-News*. 'The Hilton Hotel is now the haunt of honeymooners in search of what one couple termed yesterday "a Caribbean paradise." The couples were unanimous in their opinion about the island, which they described as "lovely and beautiful with wonderful people" ' ".

"Well," she said, "There probably aren't any sick birds at the Hilton, and I'll bet there are loads of secret police, no molestin de tourist."

"Listen to this, 'Competition within the West Indies for the tourist dollar grows apace, and Barbados will have to keep her eyes on the rest of the Caribbean if she's not to be left behind in this A-class nine-furlong event!' "

It started to rain.

—Leo J. Hertzel

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THE LIVING UNDERGROUND

George Hitchcock

George Hitchcock edits a magazine called *Kayak* and he used to be on the editorial staff of the *San Francisco Review* before it died. Both *Kayak* and *Kayak Books* are great visually. Working with an old offset press in his basement, Hitchcock, with old drawings from old books, different colored papers and inks, stretches the offset process to the limit and then some.

I first met him in the winter of 1967 when he came to Los Angeles for a reading engagement. He was all stuffed up that evening with a cold and seemed gruff, snarly, a real people-hater. A muffler w r a p p e d around his neck, red face, red nose, lead-colored hair.

Then in June of '68, when I was up at Berkeley for a conference I dropped in to see George with Janet Schwartz, the girl my wife and I were staying with at Berkeley—Janet's the daughter of a buddy of mine in the Chem Dept. at Loyola in L.A. I'd written to George I was coming up.

He met us at the door with his hair all tousled, his face, hands, arms all dirty with ink, wearing an old plaid shirt and baggy blue pants. "Just in the middle of a press run," he explained, "Wanna see how the old thing functions?"

"Yeah, sure," I answered, expecting to go down to an elaborate basement setup, very chic, up-to-date, fancy. Only it was just a very ordinary basement with a second hand offset press over in one corner, boxes of *Kayak* and *Kayak* books all over the place, most of them bound and finished and ready to go, but still with lots of loose sheets around in various stages of assembly.

"This is it?" I asked. (Don't forget *Kayak Books* are *the* most professional-looking books published by any small press in the U.S. today.)

"What did you expect?"

"I don't know."

"Come on," he said, eyeing Janet's mesh-tights-clad legs (shiny black vinyl boots and psychedelic pink miniskirt and poncho as added attractions), "let's go upstairs."

The house was very quietly arty. Lots of good paintings, odd-shaped chairs, big blue and red bottles with straw flowers sticking out of them. He gave us some wine, didn't take any himself, explaining, "Ulcers," and instead chewing on a gelusil tablet.

"You teach at San Francisco State don't you?" This was my first opportunity to sit down with Hitchcock and "confront" him and I wanted to take full advantage of it.

"Did. For one year . . . ," he said laconically, "Full Professor . . . ."

I looked around. It was a pretty nice 'establishment' to keep established, and I was always curious about 'how'.

"My wife works, I've got a little 'money,' and I make quite a bit at readings . . . and do some acting . . . . I'm a playwright and actor too, or didn't you know?"

"George," I said, "all I know is that *Kayak Books* are the best thing —visually—to come out of the Small Press World to date . . . ."

"Actually I began in the theater, then got involved with the *San Francisco Review* . . . . . that kept on for a while, now it's Kayak . . . . . ."

"So you're financially independent."

"More or less. Yes," he nodded.

Which explained a lot to me, his no-sweat attitude, his total independence, his eclectic tastes, that aura of n o n-n e e d that surrounded him. People came to him or they didn't come; either way he didn't worry. It was an enviable position.

"What about t h a t $10,000.00 grant you got from the National Arts Foundation?" asked Lucia.

The grant had been on her (our) mind for a long time. It was U.S government money, appropriated by the Congress to stimulate the arts

"Did you see the last issue of *Kayak?*" Hitchcock asked with a wicked self-satisfied grin.

"You mean the Che Guevara prize?" He'd announced in the last issue that he'd gotten the $10,000 grant, and then offered a $400.00 prize for the best poem written about Che Guevara.

"That's right."

"I'll tell you the truth," I said, "I think it's easy for someone who doesn't know anything about Latin America to idolize Che Guevara, but to me, like to most Latins, he was nothing but an Al Capone with a beard. Bolivia, the most disorganized, run-down country in the world, and he wants to start a revolution . . . . what's to revolt? What's to tear down?"

"The Establishment," answered Hitchcock. I could see he didn't like to be challenged. After all he was independently w e a l t h y, he didn't have to answer to the ordinary pressures of the U.S. economy; why should he have to answer to me?

"And what do you do for a living, little girl?" Hitchcock asked Janet.

"I'm over at Berkeley," she answered, "kind of a combination soc-psych major . . . ."

Hitchcock nodded, folded back in on himself slowly. He was beaming out the message quite clearly: Time for us to cut out.

"Well . . . . we'd better get going," said Lucia, starting to get up.

"Don't let me forget those magazines you wanted," said Hitchcock, his getting up timed perfectly with Lucia's, and he went back down into the basement.

"Neat place, nice guy, huh?" said Janet, looking around.

—Hugh Fox

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KAUL

Metamorphosis
—in Which the Modern Classic Becomes a Household Word

As Gregory Samsonite awoke one morning from uneasy dreams he found himself transformed in his bed. His once-slim, tidy body was thick and bloated; his hair, only yesterday fashionably shaggy, was thin and graying. The drooping mustache, the sideburns—gone.

He lurched out of bed and hurled himself across the room to his bureau mirror, only to be confronted by an alien face. He couldn't believe his eyes. He pinched the flesh of his cheeks, thinking perhaps that a practical joker had used makeup to disguise his true appearance. Yes, that was it! His sister . . . but no. The transformation was real. Nor was it limited to the physical; he could sense a difference in the workings of his mind.

His eye fell upon his Hermann Hesse collection. He pulled out a favorite volume—*Steppenwolf*—and thumbed through its pages. To his great amazement and horror he found it altogether unintelligible.

"My God," he said to himself. "This can't be happening to me." He went back to his bookcase and took out his hardcover copy of *The Catcher in the Rye*. He turned quickly to the "fuck you" passage. His worse fears were realized. As he read he felt an involuntary sense of shame and embarrassment spread through him.

Trying to quell the panic rising within him, he attempted one more test. He went to the closet and pulled out his golf bag. He withdrew the driver and took a stance in the middle of the bedroom floor, addressing an imaginary ball. His mother's voice came through the door. "Gregory. Wake up, Gregory. The chairman of your English department is here; he wants to know why you didn't meet your 8 o'clock."

Samsonite was a 5-handicap golfer; surely that skill had not deserted him. He guided his club through the backswing and let go. The clubhead struck the carpet a full six inches in back of the imaginary ball, bending the shaft. As he completed his follow through, the head came around and struck him just behind the left ear, drawing blood and knocking him to the floor. He lay there a moment, feeling the blood seep behind the collar of his Hathaway shirt, then sobbed: "Dear God, why me?"

"Gregory," his mother was saying. "So open the door, already. Mr. Hemingway is getting impatient."

"Doctor Hemingway, Madame," he heard old Hemingway say. Samsonite was a Ph.D. candidate in English at a midwestern state university and Hemingway was on his dissertation committee. "Wait a minute, sir," he yelled out, for want of anything better to yell.

"Jesus, I can't let him see me like this." He ran to the mirror again, hoping against hope it had all been a bad dream. It hadn't. He noticed this time that the face in the mirror, though not his, had a familiar look to it.

"Look here, Samsonite, I haven't got all day," said Hemingway's voice. "Come out. I insist on knowing why you didn't meet your class today. No sense pretending you don't understand."

"He's a good boy, Dr. H. He's been working too hard lately; all those books. Maybe he wasn't feeling so good. Come to think of it, he sounded like he was coming down with something yesterday."

"Men of letters must learn to ignore slight indispositions, Madame."

"But sir," shouted Gregory, forgetting everything else in his agitation, "don't be an impudent snob. I'll be out in a minute."

"What was that, Samsonite? What did you call me?"

Beside himself now, Samsonite unlocked his bedroom door and threw it open. His parents and the chairman froze with shock. They stared at him with mounting horror. Final-

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ly, Dr. Hemingway found his voice. "My Lord," he said. "Spiro Agnew."

It was true. In the night, while he slept, Gregory Samsonite, man of letters, had been turned into an exact replica of Spiro Agnew. Hemingway was backing toward the front door now. "Uh . . . er . . . I think I'll be . . . er . . . what I mean to say is . . . if there's anything . . ."

"Wait, Dr. Hemingway," Gregory shouted. "I can explain." He made a lunge at the chairman but the middle-aged man, with surprising agility, stiff-armed him and whirled out of his grasp, the room, and the house, disappearing in a sprint down the street.

Gregory turned to face his parents. The noise had brought his father in from the library. He was red-faced. "Is this your idea of a joke, young man?" His parents were liberal Democrats. They were members of the NAACP, the ACLU, and SNCC, when it was considered a liberal thing to be a member of. They belonged to the Citizens League Against the Sonic Boom and subscribed to the *New York Review of Books*. Gregory himself had once donated to the Black Panther Defense Fund. He could not only understand his parents' sense of humiliation, he shared it.

"Get into your room before someone else sees you," said the father. "We've got to figure out what to do about this." So saying, his father gave him such a shot that he reeled into his room and fell across the bed. As he heard the key turn in the lock, he could feel the blood once more seeping from his wound.

II

It was dusk when Gregory awoke from his heavy, deathlike sleep. He fancied he could hear the door to his room being closed. He jerked his head up to see who it was, paying for the sudden movement with a throbbing pain at the base of his skull. There was no one else in the room but, at the door, on a TV tray, was food. He suddenly realized that he was hungry.

He approached the tray and saw that it was one of his favorite meals —Chicken Kiev with wild rice, topped off by a half-bottle of an amusing little Chablis he often enjoyed. He fell upon the meal ravenously but in moments realized it was as ashes in his mouth. He could hardly bear the smell of the food and turned away from the tray in disgust. He prayed that his sister—for it was surely his sister who had prepared the meal—would notice that he had left the food untouched and would bring him something more suitable.

It was several hours before he heard a stirring at the door. It opened slowly; just a crack at first, then a few inches at a time until it stood half-open. Finally, a disembodied hand appeared out of the shadows and collected the tray. The door slammed shut. In a half-hour, the door opened and the hand deposited a white paper bag in the room. Gregory waited until the hand retreated, then raced over to the bag and tore it open. McDonald Burgers and french fries! Gluttonously he stuffed them into his mouth, his eyes moist with satisfaction. When he was done, he licked the paper wrappings.

And so it went. His father refused to allow him out of his room, for fear it would hurt his bookstore business, and his mother found it too painful to visit him. His only contact with the outside world was his sister, who on occasion would sit and talk with him in his room—or rather, try to. A Sarah Lawrence dropout, she would attempt to draw him out on the subject of his dissertation, the decline of syntax in modern American literature, but he retained no interest in it. He would ask her instead how Arnold Palmer was doing in the Masters and she would flee the room in tears. After a while, she gave up the attempts at conversation, substituting for her visits a small color television set on which Gregory could watch his favorite programs: "Green Acres," re-runs of "Gilligan's Island" and "All-Star Bowling."

III

The weeks went by in orderly procession. Gregory quickly accommodated himself to his new life style. He would spend part of each day working on his antique milk bottle top collection, part of the day reading novels—Harold Robbins, Jacqueline Susann, Mickey Spillane—the rest watching television. His sister, still clinging to hope of his recovery, would slip in more sophisticated reading matter from time to time; once she even read Tolkien aloud, but it was no use. He couldn't follow it. He took up a musical instrument, the accordion, and taught himself to play. Many an evening he would sit in his room playing for hour upon hour. "Nola" was his favorite tune. He overheard his father comment on it.

"Does he have to play that damn thing every night? I mean *every* night? It's like being cooped up with Lawrence Welk, for crying out loud."

"Let him alone, poor dear," his mother answered. "God knows he has few enough pleasures, locked in that room all day, every day."

"Why don't we get him a girl once in a while? How much can it cost, a thing like that? Who knows, maybe it would put him back on the track."

"I mentioned it to him once, but he said he was saving himself for the girl he married. He said that so long as he expected his bride to be chaste, it was only right that he . . ."

"That's enough. Stop, please. You're breaking my heart. When I think of the money I laid out to send him to progressive schools, of the sacrifices I made . . . now look what we've got."

"Look at the bright side, Harry. Of those to whom little is given, little is asked."

Gregory's encounters with his family gradually became more rare until finally, his sole outside contact was in the person of a cleaning lady who came in three times a week. She was curiously unafraid of him; she believed him to be a slightly deranged son of a family who chose to keep their shame locked in a bedroom. In a sense, she was right. She would pop her head into his bedroom and say: "How things going, Clyde?"

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"What's it to you, you dumb Polack?" he would snarl back, hating himself for it. But the cleaning lady would just laugh and stun him with her mop.

It happened that after one such incident, his mother was forced to act as hostess for the monthly meeting of her Women's Liberation Front chapter. Gregory, deep in depression, listened through his door as the ladies filed in and began to discuss ways to repel assailants. They were well into eye-gouging techniques when Gregory realized he could remain silent no longer. Surely if he came out of the room and showed himself they would understand. They would see that he meant no harm, that he was a human being like themselves. He strapped on his accordion and went through the door. No one saw him at first; then he began playing "Lady of Spain." The women, still and wide-eyed, seemed unable to comprehend what they were seeing. Slowly at first, then more hurriedly, one by one they began to leave, mumbling apologies and excuses. His mother tried to stop them. "It's my son, you see," she told them. "He's turned into Spiro Agnew and taken up the accordion because his father won't let him out of his room."

"Yes," one of the ladies said. "There's been a lot of that going around lately." They were still leaving when he finished his number. He knew he had to try and stop them. "Wait ladies, please don't leave," he said. He started forward and didn't see the coffee table. He fell headlong over it and as he hit the floor, one of the black keys of the accordion became dislodged and pierced his chest. There was little blood, almost no pain, and the end was swift. It was over almost before his mother knew what had happened.

The reaction of the family that evening was a mixture of regret and relief. "Actually, it's a lot better in many ways," said his father. "I think Gregory would have wanted it this way," said his mother. "Now I can bring friends home," said his sister. And so saying, she rose before them and stretched her young body.

—Donald Kaul

OF NOTE . . .

The North American Review *is pleased to announce that "If They Knew Yvonne," a short story by Andre Dubus which originally appeared in our pages (Fall 1969) has been selected by Martha Foley for inclusion in* The Best American Short Stories 1970. *The anthology will be published by Houghton Mifflin Company, Boston.*

We are equally pleased to acknowledge receipt of a cash grant, amounting to 3000 dollars "for general support" of the magazine, from the Coordinating Council of Literary Magazines. The grant, first offered the NAR in 1968 on condition that it be matched by the magazine from private sources, comes to us now thanks to the generous support of the faculty of the University of Northern Iowa, and of the UNI Foundation.

ANNOUNCING

The Iowa Review Winter 1970

The first issue of TIR, a literary quarterly sponsored by the University of Iowa School of Letters and Graduate College, includes

Poems by Donald Justice, William Stafford, David Salner, Stephen Parker, David Wagoner, Jirac Disslerov, Philip Levine, Michael Benedikt, and Jon Anderson

Stories by Robert Coover, Peter Israel, Charles Poverman, and Charles Aukema

Criticism by Ralph Mills on Galway Kinnell, Kenneth Fields on Wendell Berry, Richard Howard on John Wieners, and Merle E. Brown on Jon Silkin (with new poems by each of the subjects)

The second issue of TIR (Spring, 1970) will include a new story by Ralph Ellison with a critical essay on Ellison by Thomas Vogler, short prose pieces by W. S. Merwin, a story by Wilfrido Nolledo, the second part of Ralph Mills' essay on Kinnell and a conversation with the poet, an essay by Calvin Bedient on Charles Tomlinson with three new poems by the poet, and an essay by Donald Davie on the poetry of Samuel Menashe with new poems by Menashe.

TIR is edited by Merle E. Brown, Marvin Bell, and Wilfrido Nolledo. It costs $6 a year and subscriptions should be sent to the Department of Publications, The University of Iowa, Iowa City 52240.

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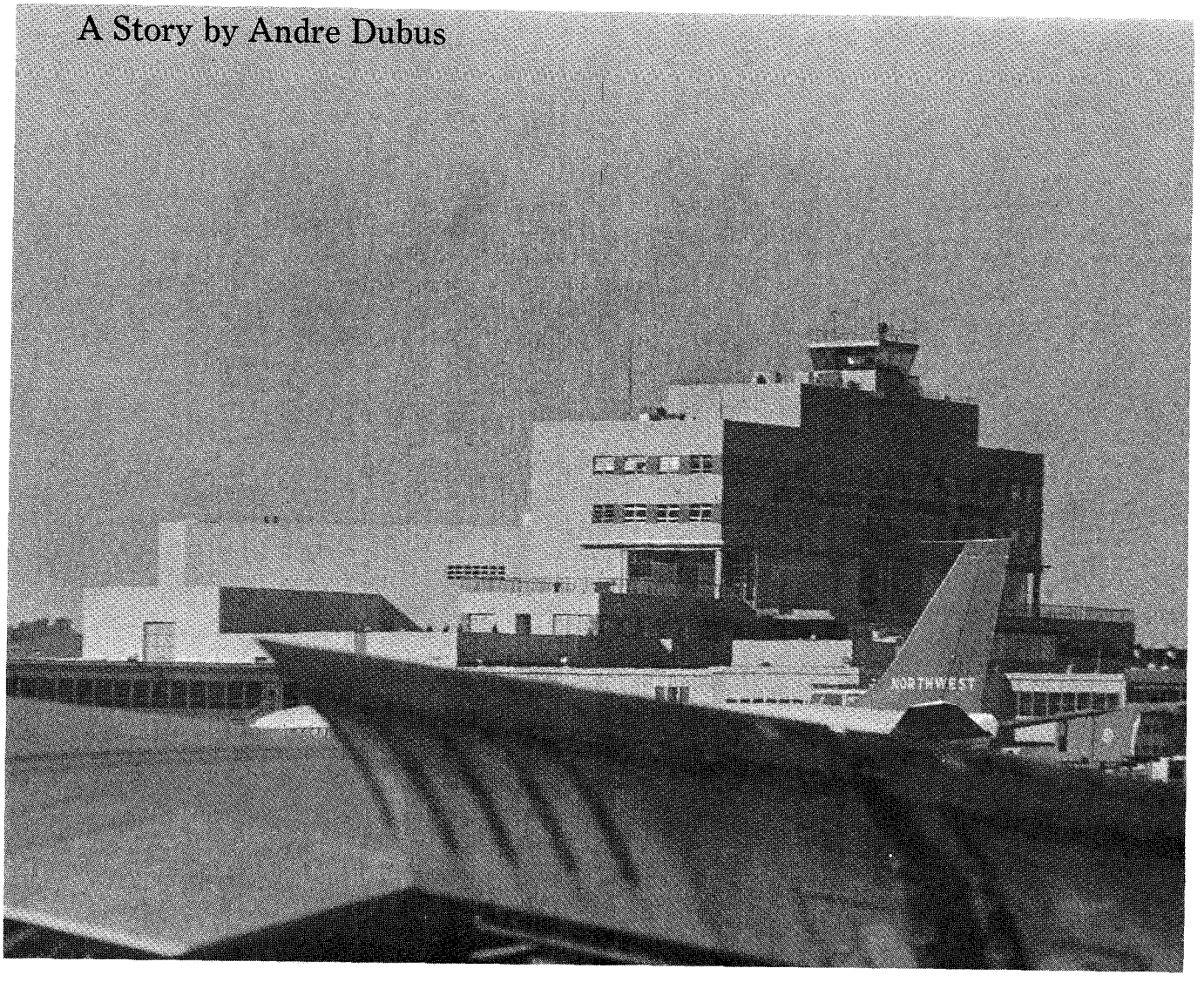
A Story by Andre Dubus



SEPARATE FLIGHTS

The whales, whose periodic suicide instinct has never been explained by scientists, started grounding themselves yesterday afternoon on the Florida Bay side of Grassy Key, about seven miles north of Marathon, in the Florida Keys.

New York *Times*

For Lynn

On the short afternoons of winter Beth Harrison turned on the lights early and started a fire in the living room; when her daughter Peggy came home from high school they sat in chairs facing the fire, Peggy drinking hot chocolate, Beth drinking a bourbon-and-water which she always thought of as her second, though sometimes it was her third. She was forty-nine years old. She did not know — or did not try to know, since there was no reason to — exactly when her before-dinner drinking had slipped into an earlier part of the afternoon. In winter she drank when she turned on the lights and started a fire. But now in May she drank gin-and-tonic while the sun angled through the kitchen windows, and Mrs. Lester on the corner played golf, and the Crenshaw boys across the street yelled and smacked a whiffle ball. She was usually alone, for Peggy and Bucky ate ice cream cones after school and went driving and Peggy came home in time for dinner, her cheeks warm, her eyes bright as though with images of trees turning green and sunlit farmers ploughing their fields.

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Today when Lee came home Beth was peeling potatoes at the kitchen table, drinking her third gin-and-tonic since taking the cleaning woman home at three-thirty. When he saw the drink in her hand his eyes changed, darkened for an instant as in scolding or scorn; then he said hello and moving around the table briefly kissed her lips.

"I picked up the tickets," he said.

"Who's going first?"

"Mine's at three-thirty and yours is four-forty."

While he was upstairs changing clothes she made two drinks, and when he came down in sport shirt and loafers he took his and started toward the living room.

"Will I see you in Chicago?" she said.

He turned at the door.

"My connection's right away, so I'll see you in San Francisco."

"Will I have to wait long?"

"Course not. I'll meet your plane."

"I mean in Chicago."

"About thirty minutes. You're on 427 from Chicago, I'm on 502."

He was turning toward the living room when she said: "So if 427 goes down — or 502 — we've made a mistake."

"Well, that's true, but it's better to gamble with losing one of us than both."

"Do you know what you're gambling with?"

"It's for Peggy, you know that."

"No, she's the stakes. I mean what's holding the other hand?"

He looked at her for a moment; then he half-turned to the living room, standing profiled in the kitchen doorway.

"All I know is it's sound, it's practical. Our company does it, other companies do it —" Then he stopped. "Anyhow —" he said, and shrugged and went into the living room; she heard him sliding the hassock then snapping straight the front page of the Des Moines *Register*. She finished peeling the potatoes and went outside to light the charcoal. She watched it until Bucky brought Peggy home, then Lee came outside and the three of them sat in lawn chairs around the grill. Peggy held a small red water pistol and shot at steak drippings that flamed on the charcoal.

"Peggy," Lee said. "You know the last thing I did before I came home today? I made a call on a woman who buried her husband last week. He was well-covered, so she's better fixed for money than she was before, but the point is she's a widow now. And you know how old she is? Fifty-five. Even if that seems old to you, it's mighty young to be a widow in 1967. She'll probably live another twenty years. And her husband: her husband was fifty-eight —"

Beth sipped her drink and watched two young squirrels darting about in the elm tree whose branches nearly touched the roof, and she wondered if she would ever see seventy-five, or if she even wanted to. Then she looked to her right, at Peggy, her blue eyes made brighter by contact lenses, her cheek concave as she drew on a cigarette, faint downy hair on her face catching the sunlight, and Beth could not imagine this child, her second and last — no: she could not imagine her living through the next sixty years. When Beth was a child the years seemed straight and simple as a road. Yet now they were wide and deep, unbounded as corn fields covered by snow, or in early spring when the fields lay bare as far as you could see and wind blew from the southwest and the sky turned black and yellow; you looked out over the blowing dust and scattered bending trees and waited for the tornado funnel. Now she heard Lee's voice but not what he said, and the squirrels had left the elm or entered its trunk, and she was thinking of long ago when she lived in the country and spring was like that. Her hand had risen to Peggy's shoulder and was resting there.

"What would I do with a thousand dollars?" Peggy said.

"Two, then. I'll give you two."

"Oh Daddy, I appreciate it. I *really* do. I mean that you care how I die. But I don't want to quit and you know yourself if you don't really want to, you can't."

"I did."

"But you were scared enough."

"And you ought to be. Haven't you heard your mother, the way she breathes when she carries in groceries or climbs the stairs? The way she coughs in the morning?"

"He's right," Beth said, and she stood and turned over the steaks. "How's Marsha?"

"Better," Peggy said. "Vic comes home on leave around June."

"Then he goes over?"

"He thinks so."

"He will," Lee said.

"You poor children," Beth said, and jabbed a steak with the fork, and Peggy shot water into the flames.

That night Beth went to bed while Lee was watching the late news. With her eyes closed she lay in the dark for thirty minutes; then Lee came upstairs and when he turned on his bedside lamp she pretended she was asleep. She tried not to be angry, tried to hold onto the little calm she had gained in half an hour of lying still, but she couldn't; for there he was, the lamp on while he emptied his pockets, coins clicking and ringing on the chest of drawers: if she had been asleep, that light and sound would have waked her. He got into bed, turned out the light, and she listened to his breathing as it slowed and deepened (and yes: oh yes he was right of course about her: she breathed badly), and she wondered what he thought about in those last conscious minutes. They passed quickly: he shifted a leg, and was asleep. She lit a cigarette, knowing that if she were asleep the scrape of flint, the clicking shut of the Zippo, perhaps even the small flame would intrude as jarringly as an alarm clock or the frightful after-midnight ringing of a phone. She believed any sound would do that: a light rain, a gentle wind rustling the elm leaves, Lee or even Peggy down the hall stirring in bed. Sometimes she woke at night and there was no sound at all; she would lie there in the silence,

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afraid, as though she had been wakened by the presence of fog outside her window.

She had tried everything she knew of except drugs. She had talked to Polly Fairchild who couldn't sleep either: Polly had told her that a snack before bed would take blood from her brain and help her relax. If she woke in the night she should get up and read, drink some milk, and she shouldn't smoke. Sometimes you could talk yourself to sleep: *my feet are going to sleep, my feet are going to sleep, my ankles are* — And she mustn't worry: if at nine o'clock or so she started worrying about whether or not she could sleep, she'd only make herself more tense. But none of this worked for Polly: she took a pill every night and slept soundly. She told Beth they were mild, they weren't habit-forming, and though it took her longer to feel really awake in the morning, that was an easy price for a good night's sleep.

Beth said no. When Lee suggested drugs, she said no again; she would not, she said, take a drug so she could sleep. If she couldn't do something as natural and inevitable as sleeping, she wanted to know why. So night after night she went to bed and lay awake or, after sleeping for a while, she woke again and lay smoking in the dark for an hour and sometimes more. Yet after all this time alone she still didn't know why she couldn't sleep. She knew this much, though: she was not equipped to solve a problem of this sort. Until now she had always dealt with problems that had alternatives and you weighed them and made a choice, like buying one dishwasher instead of another. But now the buyer's instinct was useless: what was needed was a probing insight into herself, and this was a bitter and unprofitable task. For when she did try to explore herself she found — oh God: she found nothing.

Now she got out of bed, went downstairs to the kitchen, and made a gin-and-tonic. She sat on the couch in the dark living room, lit a cigarette and exhaled quickly before a cough jerked upward from her chest. She knew it was long after midnight, but being awake down here wasn't altogether bad as long as she didn't think of getting up in the morning, and how tired she would be; she never slept in the afternoon, for she was afraid a nap robbed that much more sleep from the coming night. But if she could give up the idea of sleeping, devote herself to the moment at hand, there was an appealing secretive quality about sitting alone in a quiet and darkened house. She knew why too: because upstairs Lee slept like a child, with his clean lungs, his exercised body, and his mind that worked with the precision of numbers.

After another drink she felt sleepy. She was afraid that climbing the stairs would quicken her blood and breath and wake her again; so stretching out on the couch, she slept. She woke to the pounding of Lee's in-place running in their bedroom directly above her. Peggy came downstairs first and sat at the kitchen table with a cup of coffee. When Lee came down, smelling of after-shave lotion, Beth was pouring buckwheat mix into a bowl.

"What did you do, sleep on the couch?"

"I was down here when I got sleepy, so I stayed."

"You were asleep when I went up."

"It didn't last."

He poured a cup of coffee and sat down.

"You don't have to stay awake," he said.

"I know."

"There's nothing wrong with taking something to help you sleep."

"I used to sleep," she said.

That afternoon she drove Lee to the Cedar Rapids airport, then went back to Iowa City, picked up Peggy at school, and got to the airport in time for a quick drink in the cocktail lounge, a martini for her and a Coke for Peggy. She was not excited about going to a convention of insurance men in San Francisco, but she pretended to Peggy that she was. She told Peggy what food was in the refrigerator, reminded her to leave the back door unlocked while she was at school so the dry cleaners could deliver the clothes, and told her again the name of the hotel in San Francisco. Then she said: "Look, I probably don't have to tell you this, but I ought to anyway: don't have Bucky over while we're gone."

"I didn't plan to."

"Well, I trust you, and if it weren't for the neighbors I wouldn't care. But you don't want gossip."

"No."

"So tell him goodnight on the front porch, okay?"

Peggy did. For the next three nights, after making love in her bed (and they had never had a bed) she told Bucky goodnight on the dark front porch, the living room behind them darkened too, so he could slip out and across the lawn to his car parked down the street.

2

"No," Beth said, on the plane from San Francisco to Chicago, "I'm really not afraid."

Her seat was next to the window, and now she looked out, testing what she had just said. They were flying through clouds so thick that she couldn't see the wing behind her. She thought of the pilot flying by instruments, she thought of human error, she imagined a mid-air collision. Then she turned back to Robert Carini, the silversmith from New York, who a moment ago had lifted his glass in salute and said he was afraid of flying so he was glad he had someone to talk to.

"My husband would get twenty thousand dollars, though. I don't like that."

"That's not so much. I took out sixty-five."

"Oh, I don't mean those slot machines. He told me to get some of that, but I didn't. No, he has a policy on me for ten thousand, with double indemnity."

"That's an expensive funeral."

An earlier story by ANDRES DUBUS, "If They Knew Yvonne," appeared in the Fall 1969 number of this magazine. Mr. Dubus lives in Massachusetts, teaches at Bradford Junior College, and will spend the summer working on a film script.

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"It's not to bury me. He says women are worth more these days, and it'd cost at least that to hire someone to *do* what I do."

Then they were smiling at each other.

"Cooking," Beth said.

"Where is he now?"

"Flying to Chicago. We took separate flights."

"Oh I see. So —"

"Yes. So we won't die together."

Two hours ago she had been drinking coffee with Lee in a lunchroom at the San Francisco airport. At a table to their left a young soldier and his wife were finishing lunch, talking quietly, their eyes shifting and lowering with that distraction of transitional conversations. In the lobby there were soldiers without girls: at the magazine rack, the tobacco counter, sleeping in chairs; as Beth and Lee walked through she said: "If I were young and single I'd be a soldier's girl." Relighting his pipe, he glanced at her. He walked too fast, and she was short of breath when they reached the gate. She went through the lobby with him, to the door. He looked up at the sky, said "Still cloudy" then kissed her and said: "I'll see you in Cedar Rapids." She stood in the doorway until he boarded a plane, then she found a bar. There were two men sitting apart from each other at the bar, and a young Naval officer with a girl at a small table. Beth sat at the end of the bar and ordered a Bloody Mary.

Waiting for a separate flight made her feel she was involved in a childish ruse. But with her second drink she thought of her plane crashing, a death so much quicker than her actual dying would be. A violent death like that would be an awful shock for Peggy, and now she felt sorry for Peggy and Helen and Helen's two children, Wendy and Billy, who would wonder if it hurt Granma when the plane crashed; and she even felt sorry for Lee who was sentimental and would therefore believe he was burying something, and next year when Peggy went to college he would be lonely in the house at night. And all this time, sipping her drink and thinking of her own death, there was something else in the back of her mind, something desperately mean, and now with a guilty catch of her breath she let it out: what if *his* plane crashed? She finished her drink in a swallow and left the bar.

She boarded her plane; tall Mr. Carini with his thick white hair and lined dark face was already there, in the aisle seat. The stewardess brought champagne cocktails, and before take-off Beth knew his name and that he was a silversmith.

"Are you really?" she had said. "I thought only Mexicans and Indians did that."

He had smiled and said Oh no, he did it too, although he mostly just ran things now, and once in a while made something for his wife and daughter. She asked if he had anything with him, anything he had made, and he said no but he'd send her a bracelet, and he wrote her address in a notebook. It had been a long time since she had met anyone whose work was either new or interesting. He ordered martinis and she asked questions about his work, real questions that she wanted answers to, and when he lit her cigarettes she took his hand and guided the flame.

"Your husband's a very practical man," he said now.

"He sells life insurance."

"Oh. And what do you do?"

"I don't do anything."

"Of course you do."

"A lot of this," she said, and lifted her glass.

"Really?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Do you have children?"

"Two girls. One married, one seventeen."

"So you're alone most of the time."

"I have friends: you know, wives of my husband's friends. And Helen — she's my married daughter — she lives in Iowa City, so sometimes after shopping I go see her and we drink beer in her kitchen."

"It's good you're close like that."

"We're really not, though. I mean we are but she doesn't really talk to me. You know. But at least she's there and she seems to like it when I go over and I try not to go over too often. Most afternoons I do other things."

"Bridge?"

"That, and the other things."

"Is it so bad?"

"I hate it," she said.

She was surprised she had said that; then she was glad.

"Not really," he said.

"Yes. Really." Then she turned her eyes from his and looked out the window where still there was nothing but air like wet smoke.

"So many people are like that," he said.

She looked at him.

"But you're not?"

"No," he said. "No: maybe I'm fooling myself, but I don't think so."

"At least you know about other people. My husband doesn't. He lives on routine like a soldier and that's all he sees."

"But that can be desperation too, living like that. It's like deep water pressure: take some fish out of it and they turn belly-up and die."

"I'll have to pull him up some time, and see what happens."

They had second martinis, then the stewardess brought their lunch, chateaubriand, and poured their first glasses of burgundy, then asked Robert if they wanted to keep the bottle. He said yes. She spoke to them as a couple rather than fellow passengers, and Beth was amused and also felt pleasingly wicked. She was watching Robert's face; he suddenly squinted and she turned to the window: they had broken through the clouds into a glaring sky that was blue and clear as far ahead as she could see. She looked down at green and yellow and brown squares of earth.

"I wonder what state that is."

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Robert leaned toward the window, his face near her shoulder.

"One of those flat ones."

"Do you feel safer when it's clear?"

"Better, anyway. Clouds are gloomy."

"And there I was, having such fun drinking with you in a cloud."

"It'll be more fun in the blue," he said, and poured wine in her glass.

"I wasn't put on this plane to have fun. I was put on it so I'd die alone."

"Are you nice to your husband?"

"I think so. I try to be."

"That's what I thought. But you're pretty tough on him now."

"I guess I am. And I guess I shouldn't feel sorry for myself just because what happens to most people has happened to me."

Then in a low collusive voice, in their odd privacy that was also public so she again felt illicit, she talked about love. She did not know when she had stopped loving her husband, she said. In a way she was grateful it had happened so late because by that time she had stopped believing in love anyway. No, Robert said, it must have been the other way. She thought about that, lighting a cigarette from the one she was smoking (drinking always seemed to clear her bronchial tubes so she could smoke more) then she said Yes, he was probably right. She must have stopped loving him long before she admitted it, then still deceiving herself about Lee she stopped believing in love altogether, thus arming herself to come back full circle and admit she did not love him. That way it was easier to take: you suspected something had died in your house, so you looked around and saw that it was long dead in everyone else's house too; then you were able to return and look under your own bed and find, sure enough, a corpse.

She accepted that death. It was as natural and predictable as a wrinkled face. She would not look under that bed again or anyone else's, for oh she had looked too often, too often . . . She told Robert of her mother who was probably content and certainly stupid, for she firmly ignored all failures of the human heart. In her mother's mind everyone lived a life that could be recorded on the obituary page of a newspaper: you were born here, went to school there, were married to a man with such-and-such a job, and you had children. If you asked her about someone she would say: Oh she's doing wonderfully; she has a fine husband and two lovely children.

"She told me that once, about a niece of mine. And I said: I know all that, Mother; what I asked is how *is* she?"

And how could anyone be oblivious to all those signs you could see whether you were looking or not? Give me an hour in a room full of married couples, she said, and I can see their hostilities as plainly as the clothes they wear. Not that she wanted to either. But it was true, all too true, and at least once you understood this, accepted it as commonplace, it wasn't difficult at all to admit that your own life — which long ago you believed was marked for love — had followed the general pattern of humanity. The difficult part was concealing this from your children. At Helen's wedding she had of course cried a little, and for some of the accepted reasons: a daughter had grown, a daughter was leaving, a phase of her own life had ended. But her tears were bitter too, for she knew the rest of Helen's life would never live up to the emotional promise of that day. Like graduation ceremonies where you heard all those words about what lay ahead, then you went out and nothing happened. Helen and Larry would end up, in a friendly way, boring each other, disliking each other. She kept thinking of that during the wedding; in the reception line, when she had to listen to those lecherous old men and tender hopeful old women, she had to clamp her teeth on ironic replies. And now her seventeen year old, Peggy, was in love and she liked to talk about her plans, with this grown-up tone in her voice, and there was nothing to do but listen to her, not as you listen to a child who wants to be a movie star but to a child whose hope for friends or happiness is so strong yet futile that you know it will break her heart.

"You expected too much," Robert said. "Why don't you tell her not to expect too much? Not to stake her whole life on marriage. It's part of her life, but not all."

"What does your wife do?"

"She's a teacher. Fourth grade."

"*That* makes a difference."

They were finishing the wine when the pilot announced their approach to Chicago.

"I've had fun," Beth said.

"Do you have a layover?"

"An hour."

"I have two and a half. We can have a drink."

"We'll be drunk."

"Well, you like to be and for the flight home I need to be."

"We'll have a drink."

"Take-offs and landings are the worst," he said. The plane had begun its descent; he took her hand.

In the airport they drank standing at a crowded bar. A clock looked at them from above the rows of bottles. Twenty-five minutes before her flight Robert ordered second drinks; she was about to say there wasn't time, but then she didn't. She turned and watched two Air Force lieutenants come through the door and go to the bar. She was looking at their silver wings when her plane was announced. She turned back to her drink. It was half-finished; she picked it up, then instead of drinking she stirred it with a finger.

"Two pilots just came in," she said. "All that time with you on the plane I had forgotten the war."

He turned and looked at them.

"It's not their fault," he said. "They're just kids."

"I guess so, but pilots —" Sipping her drink she glanced up at the clock. "We voted for peace in '64, for Johnson."

"So did we."

"For peace?"

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"Yes. And my son graduates from college this month."

She touched his wrist.

"Oh you poor man. Will they get him?"

"Sure they will, sooner or later."

"I'm glad I don't have a son."

"I'd like to keep mine. He's —" Then he frowned and shook his head, his eyes somewhere else now, in New York, on his son's face, in Vietnam. "Wasn't that your plane?"

"I don't know. What did they say?"

"Two twenty-three to Cedar Rapids."

"My God, yes."

She looked at the clock, drained her glass, and slid off the stool. They walked quickly down the corridor to her gate.

"Could've missed it," he said.

"Another couple of minutes."

They found her gate number and walked faster against a crowd of passengers who had just got off a plane.

"Maybe I did," she said. "No one's going this way."

He looked at his watch.

"Three minutes," he said. "I enjoyed it."

"So did I."

At the gate the clerk grabbed her ticket and shook his head.

"You almost missed it, lady."

"She's here," Robert said. "Just do what you're paid for."

Hurrying beside her across the small lobby he took her elbow and said: "I'll send you a bracelet."

"Good."

He pressed her hand and she slowed for a moment.

"If you ever get to New York —"

"Right," she said, then turned and walked as fast as she could out into the warm sunlight. The uniformed man at the foot of the ladder motioned for her to hurry; at the hatch the stewardess, who was annoyed, smiled and said something, and Beth lowered her face so the girl wouldn't smell gin. She sat in an empty seat at the rear. The plane was small, with propellers; the air conditioning wasn't working and the air was stale. Beth was tight. As the plane took off she wondered if Robert was standing at the door, watching. Then she unbuckled her seat belt and lit a cigarette and looked out the window at the flat earth.

Lee and Peggy were waiting at the airport. She kissed them and asked Peggy if everything was all right. Then Lee said: "Well, it worked."

"What worked?"

"The planes." He was grinning. "Neither one of them crashed."

3

On the way home they stopped at a restaurant for dinner. In a high, delighted voice Beth told Peggy about the fun they had had in San Francisco (she had not had fun in San Francisco), about the Top o' the Mark and Fisherman's Wharf, while all the time, eating her steak, she sat huddled around her warm secret. That night she took it to bed with her and after Lee was sleeping she lit a cigarette and thought of Robert Carini and a hotel in Chicago; she pulled her nightgown above her hips; she moved slowly so Lee wouldn't wake, and the threat of his waking excited her, and thinking of Robert Carini excited her; she felt wicked, and her fingers holding the cigarette trembled. Then she slept.

It became one of her rituals: at first she told herself she was doing it because her heart was unfaithful and in this way she was having her night with Robert (he did not send a bracelet; after ten days she gave up, with more disappointment than she had expected) but after a few nights she didn't really think of Robert, or of anyone else. Later she told herself she was doing it to help her sleep, though usually she slept just as badly. Then she saw the truth: lying beside Lee, moving and breathing in secret passion, she made her loneliness and dislike for him active: she thought of him beside her, knowing nothing of his own wife, of how little he mattered. Afterward she felt guilty, and she treasured that guilt because it was new. But soon enough guilt faded; next the act itself grew boring; yet she clung to it, forced herself into the only emotions that remained: her heart, beating rapidly toward orgasm, felt mean and vengeful.

Which was not enough. Guilt had been the proper ending for those minutes at night: it had made her feel she was returning home after committing a sin. Now, with the loss of guilt, her nights were changed: her passion took her nowhere, returned her from nowhere. It was merely an extension of the bitterness of her days. She did it less frequently.

What she wanted was not so much to sin but to be able to sin. She started thinking of Robert Carini again. She didn't imagine making love with him. She thought of the guilt: phoning Lee from Chicago to say she had missed connections and would fly to Cedar Rapids tomorrow, then tingling with lies she would have gone to dinner with Robert; after that, in the hotel lobby and elevator and corridor, surely her conscience would have gone to work on her, making her think of Peggy and Helen and Wendy and Billy; and possibly even Lee. And perhaps in the morning she would have opened her eyes to fear and remorse. She might even have returned tender and compassionate to her ordered, disciplined, cuckolded Lee.

But maybe she would have felt nothing except a natural apprehension when she first looked at Lee's face, and when he asked where she had spent the night, was there any trouble finding a room, did she have enough money. Because in order to sin you had to depart from something you believed in, and she had no assurance that being a mother, a grandmother, and a wife would flavor that one night with wickedness. And if that were so, if a night with Robert would have been no more sinful than her private minutes beside Lee, it was better that he had not let her miss the plane.

Yet where had it gone? She had been reared a Catholic, then at some time between starting college and marrying Lee she had stopped being one. She had stopped

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as unconsciously as your face tans in summer and pales in winter. There had been no iconoclastic teacher, no agnostic roommate: it had been largely a matter of sleeping late on Sunday mornings. Remembering now, she thought there must have been something else, some question on a point of dogma, some dispute with a priest, some book or philosophy course. But there was not, and she was ashamed: not because she had no religion but because she had changed her life without thinking about it. And she had not thought of it since then, except when a friend or relative died (and Kennedy and Marilyn Monroe and Hemingway and Gary Cooper) and for a while she wondered if they were immortal.

But that was all. She assumed there was a God, but maybe there wasn't; worse still, it didn't seem to matter. She didn't know whether Lee believed or not. She could not remember ever talking about God. You didn't do that, sit around talking about God. You talked with frustration about things outside your life, like Johnson and the war; or you talked about the surfaces of your life: the children and grandchildren and school for Peggy and things you had done and things you had to do: — *had all the groceries there and then I looked in my purse and no wallet, I had left it in the other purse, and no checkbook either, so she had to wait while I went to the courtesy counter and used one of their checks; what should we get Peggy for graduation? a watch? you take the VW to work then, and they can pack the wheel bearings on the Lincoln while I'm shopping; a watch, do you think?* You scheduled these things, got them done between the hands of the clock, and at night they gave you conversation. Maybe late some night when Peggy was asleep she ought to make Lee sit down with her and a bottle of gin and she would tell him what she did at night and why, tell him of Robert and how she had waited for a bracelet in the mail, and tell him that on those nights when he made love to her she was eager and hot, but only for herself, and a hand covered her heart and would not yield it to him.

As the summer grew hotter, the idea of such a conversation enticed her. If her belief in God had changed passively, her marriage could change in one violently quick night. The frightening and appealing thing was she could not predict what would happen. Separation, divorce, a marriage counselor — even something new and good, both of them with painful and productive honesty voicing all their dislikes, their secrets (she recalled the moment in San Francisco when she had thought of his plane crashing), and after that maybe they could stand among the fallen roof and exploded walls of what they had called their marriage, and wounded and trembling and alone they could hold hands and start from there. But such a dream was nonsense, and she knew it, and the days of summer went on.

Then one night in mid-July she woke and lay smoking and listened to the hum of the air conditioner in the window. She didn't know what time it was, nor did she want to: she knew she would be awake for at least an hour, probably more. Her hand moved down, then stopped; she didn't want that, it was boring and it took too long and didn't even help her sleep. She got up and put on a summer robe; she would drink gin-and-tonic in the living room and talk to herself until she was sleepy. Tomorrow was Saturday, so she had no reason to get up; going downstairs she thought of living a nocturnal life when Peggy went to college. She could stay up most of the night until she was truly sleepy, wake up long enough to fix breakfast for Lee, then go back to bed and sleep into the afternoon. Insomnia was only bad if you had to go to sleep and wake at certain times. A bizarre solution, simply to throw away schedules, but you couldn't deny it was a solution; and crossing the kitchen floor in the dark she was pleased, thinking how Lee would despise a life of that sort. He would find several reasons against it but he would never admit his real objection: that people were supposed to be awake in daylight and asleep at night.

She switched on a light and blinked at the clock on the kitchen wall: ten minutes to three. She could hear the air conditioner in the living room; she thought either she had forgotten to turn it off or Peggy and Bucky had come in after their date and turned it on then Peggy had forgotten it, which was just as well, for already the kitchen was hot and she would go sit in the cool living room and drink gin and perhaps watch the sunrise. She opened the refrigerator and saw there was beer and decided to drink that, because it was simpler and enough of it made her sleepy. She popped open a can and turned off the kitchen light, for she wanted everything dark; she pushed through the swinging door into the living room then stopped, her eyes snapping toward the other sounds which she understood even before she saw the two standing and quick-moving silhouettes at the couch across the room. Her hand darted to the table lamp beside her, but for an instant she squeezed the switch between thumb and finger; her mouth opened to speak but she didn't do that either; then she turned on the switch and stepped back from the sudden light and what she saw in it: Peggy's face hidden inside the dress she was pulling down and shrugging into, and Bucky with his naked back turned, snapping his trousers at the waist. Beth turned out the light before Peggy's face came out of the dress. She backed through the kitchen door and leaned against the sink and took a long swallow of beer.

They would be whispering now. She couldn't hear them, but she moved farther from the door anyway. She finished the beer before she heard the front door closing, then she waited again. She lit a cigarette and was going to the refrigerator for another beer when Peggy came in, standing with lowered head while the door swung shut behind her. Beth hugged her and stroked her long hair.

"Do you want a beer while we talk?"

Peggy nodded against her shoulder. They went into the living room and, avoiding the couch, Beth chose the easy chairs where she and Lee sat at night to watch television or read. The chairs were side-by-side, with a table and lamp between; when Beth and Peggy sat down, the lampshade hid their faces.

"Has it been — going on?"

"Yes."

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"I won't tell Daddy."

"Please don't. Ever."

"No. No, he won't know. He sees things — I don't know how he sees things, but it's different. And now —"

And now what? Instead of turning on that lamp she could have backed out of the room, gone upstairs to bed, and never mentioned it again: she could have pretended to Peggy and gradually to herself that she thought they were only kissing. Which was still another lie: everyone knew that young people did everything short of making love, yet you called it kissing. And she could have done that tonight, but she hadn't, and by turning on the lamp she had committed herself to something more, to the awful risk of forming words and throwing them out into the dark like so many sparks in a dry season. And now that it was time she had nothing to say, and she nearly said Let's have a good night's sleep and talk about it tomorrow while Daddy's playing golf. But she would not do that, she would *not*. So she decided to talk about those things she did know, to at least deal with and probably eliminate them.

"If I were still a Catholic then you'd be one too and all I'd have to do is send you to the priest tomorrow. I'd tell you it was a sin and he'd tell you it was a sin and you'd believe it. Then he'd tell you to break up with Bucky. But we're not Catholics or anything else, so that leaves us with clichés, and what's wrong with that is a cliché is an out, it just sort of hangs around and waits for someone to use it and when you do use one it saves you from having to think. So now I could say that nice girls make love for the first time on their wedding nights and they never make love with anyone else unless they're divorced first —" The word divorce made her think of Lee sleeping above them, and that she was forty-nine, and that Peggy was leaving for college in two months and during the next four years her need for parents and a home would gradually diminish. "But you see there's no sense in my telling you all that because you know it's just not so. I mean, do you *feel* bad? Evil?"

"I do right now, but not —" She took one of Beth's cigarettes.

"Not with him?"

"No."

"Good. I want you to be happy, and I'm not going to ask you to stop seeing him —"

"You're not?"

"Did you think I would?"

"I thought you'd have to."

"That would be a lie too. Because I don't really have any reason to. Not any good ones, anyway. And you have to believe this: I don't think you're bad, and I love you very much, and you must never feel ashamed. You can tell Bucky I didn't see anything or you can tell him the truth."

"The truth."

"All right."

"He'll be afraid. When he has to see you."

"Tell him not to be. Is there anything you need to talk about?"

"No."

"I mean, I've told you what's not the truth about sex, or at least what I think isn't the truth. I suppose now I ought to tell you — I don't know, something else."

"You don't have to."

"You're all right?"

"Yes. I love him."

"Suppose you get pregnant?"

"He's careful."

"Those things don't always work."

"Well they *have* to."

"No they don't, I can at least tell you that. I want you to take the pills."

The sky was dark still; in another two hours dawn would come; two hours after that, Lee would wake to a house that had changed.

"I'll make the appointment and I'll go with you."

She rose and stood in front of Peggy, who sat with lowered head, her knees pressed together.

"We'll tell him you're getting married."

"Well I can, but —" Then she stopped.

"It's all I ask. Will you do that for me?"

After a moment, Peggy nodded.

"I'd do anything in the world for you," she said.

With arms around each other they climbed the stairs, then kissed. Beth went to her room and shut the door and looked at Lee's face in the dark: an open-mouthed, weary frown. She thought tenderly of how his face had changed. Then she got into bed and slept. She woke up while Lee was doing push-ups on the bedroom floor. She told him she had been awake most of the night and asked if he could fix his breakfast so she could go back to sleep. He said all right, he'd just have some cereal. When she woke after one o'clock she dressed and went downstairs; Peggy was drinking coffee in the kitchen.

"Has Daddy left?"

"Yes." Peggy blushed. "Bucky loves you."

"Oh, you called him?"

"As soon as Daddy left."

"Good. I'll have a cup of coffee, then take you to lunch. Unless you're doing something else."

"No, he's still afraid to come over till he picks me up tonight."

They went in the Volkswagen to a restaurant across the street from the university, then walked in the hot afternoon to several stores and bought Peggy a blouse. They spent the rest of the afternoon talking and laughing about trivial things, and at dinner Lee smiled at them with curiosity and pride. During the next four days Beth was sometimes frightened but always happy: she thought it was a wonderful paradox that Peggy's having an affair made them even closer than they had been before. On the fifth day they drove to a gynecologist in Cedar Rapids. Going there, Peggy was nervous and talked about yesterday's swimming party; coming home she was distant and hardly talked at all.

"He probably didn't believe us," she said. "He knows I'm not old enough to get married."

"It doesn't matter."

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"I guess not."

"You're safe now. That's what matters."

That night after dinner, Peggy scraped the dishes, put them in the dishwasher, then went upstairs. After a while Beth went up. Peggy was reading in bed.

"Aren't you going out?"

"No."

"You aren't having a fight, are you?"

"No."

"It's so early. Do you feel all right?"

"I'm fine. I just don't feel like going out and trying my pill, like a new hat or something."

"Oh. Well —"

"Don't worry. I'm all right."

Beth stood in the doorway for a moment, watching her read; then she went downstairs. The next night Peggy went to a movie with Marsha. On the third night Bucky took her to dinner. He was able to look into Beth's eyes again and as she walked with them out on the porch and told them goodbye she felt her collusion was with Bucky, not Peggy. It was almost eight o'clock, but daylight savings time, and the sky was still light. She watched them get into the car. Bucky was talking and Peggy, looking straight ahead, shrugged her shoulders. When they drove off, Beth turned to the door then stopped; she did not want to go in. The dishes were washed, the kitchen cleaned, there was nothing on television, and she did not want to read. She sat on the wooden steps of the porch and watched the night come. When she went back inside Lee was still sitting in his chair, reading *Time*.

"What were you doing?"

"Just sitting. It's cool, but the mosquitoes got bad."

She lit a cigarette and sat on the couch, facing him. For a while she watched him read.

"Lee?"

"What," not raising his eyes.

"Do you believe in God?"

"Sure."

His eyes lingered, probably finishing a paragraph: then he lowered the magazine.

"Why? Don't you?"

"I don't know."

"You never told me."

"No. Will you take me to a movie?"

"Now?"

"If you want to."

"Can we make it?"

"I'll call and find out."

The last feature would start in twenty minutes, so they went. When they got home Lee finished whatever he had been reading in *Time*, and Beth had a drink. She was going to the kitchen for another when Lee started upstairs, so she closed the liquor cabinet and followed him up and they made love.

"You didn't want to talk about God, did you?" he said. His voice was sleepy.

"No."

"Good thing. I don't know any more than you do."

"Then you don't know a thing."

"What made you ask me that anyway?"

"Because I question the way we live."

"How do you mean?"

"Why we do things."

"What things?"

"I don't know. I wonder about the girls, how we've done with them."

"We've done all right."

"It's not that simple, though."

"What isn't?"

"Everything. Everything isn't that simple."

She lay awake for another half hour or so, then slept. She woke up when Peggy closed the front door. The next sound was the refrigerator. After a while Peggy came upstairs and went to her room. Beth wanted to go talk to her, but she could not think of an excuse. She lit a cigarette and got up and stood at the window, looking at the streetlight on the corner. Once in a while she looked back at Lee sleeping on his side, and she wished she were like him: believing she knew those things she had to know, and not caring to know anything else. If she were that way she would not be standing here at the window; she might be sleeping or even talking to Peggy now, maybe they would go down to the kitchen for a snack and sit there eating and talking; because above all, if she were that way, she would not have turned on that lamp.

4

In the morning — Saturday again — Peggy was the same: her voice was quiet, her smile was the kind you give old ladies. After lunch, when Lee had gone to play golf, Beth asked Peggy if she wanted the car.

"No."

"I need some things in town," Beth said.

She was going to see Helen, and lying about it to Peggy made her feel more lonely. On the way she bought popsicles for Wendy and Billy. Helen lived in the country; for the last two miles Beth left the highway and drove on a dusty road through fields of tall corn. When she turned into the driveway Wendy and Billy saw her from the gym set in the back yard and ran to the car. They wore bathing suits. She hugged and kissed them and unwrapped the melting popsicles, and they walked back toward the gym set. Helen was in the kitchen doorway, holding the screen open.

"Beer?"

"All right."

"Larry went back to bed. There was a party last night, and we got about three hours sleep."

"Aren't you going to sleep?"

"Tonight. I could put the kids down for a nap, but I don't like to. Wendy doesn't sleep."

"She could sit in bed with books or something. She'd be all right."

"I know, but it makes me feel degenerate. Let's go in the living room."

They sat in front of a large fan and Beth looked out the picture window at the willow tree in the front yard, its branches touching the ground. Across the dirt road

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there was heat shimmer above the corn that grew as far as she could see. As Helen lit a cigarette her hands trembled.

"You're hung over too."

"Just tired. I don't get drunk at those parties."

"That's smart."

"Next time I'll be smart about leaving too. How's Peggy?"

"Fine."

"Excited about New England?"

"I guess."

"Still going steady?"

"Oh sure."

"Then it's good she's leaving. She's too young for that."

"You weren't much older."

"No, I guess I wasn't. Shall we have another?"

"It'll just make you sleepier."

"As long as I'm suffering I might as well drink."

"Okay."

Helen took the empty cans to the kitchen. Beth knew she ought to leave and let Helen rest somehow, at least spare her the effort of talking. But she thought of going home to Peggy and she could not. Helen came back eating a sandwich.

"Peanut butter. You want some?"

"No thanks. Listen: you go up and take a nap and I'll stay with the children."

"I've made it this far, I can make it till tonight."

"Don't be silly. Finish your beer then go up and sleep."

"You're being silly. What kind of visit is that?"

"Well, it's not like I drove a hundred miles. Come on: let me. Don't you know I love to be with them?"

Helen took a long swallow and sank in her chair.

"You're tempting me."

"Do it, then. Think how nice it'll be to just go upstairs and lie down and sleep."

"I'll do it."

"Good."

"But first I'll put Billy to bed."

"I'll do that. Just finish your beer and go to bed."

"Oh, my." She drank. "Oh my, you're good to me."

Now that her favor was accepted, Beth wanted something in return. She wanted very much to talk about Peggy, but she recognized her need for what it was. She didn't want advice: if she did, she wouldn't ask it from her twenty-five year old daughter. Nor did she want Helen to speak to Peggy. She merely wanted to talk about it, to share with someone else the burden of her decision. But she couldn't do that: it was cowardly, and it wasn't fair to Peggy. So they made small talk, then Helen said "That beer's there to be drunk" and went upstairs. Beth went outside and carried Billy upstairs; his eyes were closing as she covered him with a sheet and turned on the fan. Going downstairs she wanted another beer but she went past the refrigerator and out into the yard. She could not drink beer all afternoon; the day was too hot and she would drink too fast and go home tight. For a while under the hot sun she pushed Wendy in the swing.

"Aren't you hot?" she said.

"No."

She pushed her again, then held the chains and Wendy swayed then stopped.

"I am. What do you do with that willow tree?"

"What tree."

"In the front yard."

"Nothing."

"Come on. We'll have a tea party."

In the kitchen she made grape Kool-Aid.

"Are there some cookies?"

"Mama hides 'em."

She looked high in the pantry, found chocolate Oreos, and put some on a plate. Wendy carried it out to the willow tree. Beth brought a beer, the pitcher of Kool-Aid, and a glass for Wendy. Under the willow tree there was shade; across the road the cornstalks were moving with a gentle breeze, and after Beth and Wendy had sat still for a while they could feel it.

"This is a good place," Wendy said.

"It is."

"I bet nobody can see us."

"Not unless they look real hard."

When the cookies were gone Wendy got restless. She walked head first through the hanging branches and stood looking into the dust-covered weeds in the ditch beside the road. Sitting on the grass, Beth said: "Don't you want to stay in here?"

"No."

"Wait. I'll be right back."

She went into the house. Upstairs in Wendy's room she found a checkerboard and box of checkers: they were all there. She got a beer and went outside.

"Do you know how to play checkers?"

"I forgot."

Beth parted the branches and went through and sat in the shade.

"Come here and I'll show you."

For the next two hours, until Helen and Larry came outside with their faces washed and sleepy-looking, she drank beer and played checkers with Wendy. Driving home she opened all the car windows so air blew on her face, but when she parked in the garage she still felt tight. She had also smoked too much: crossing the lawn she wheezed and when she coughed to clear her chest she brought up something. She swallowed and went inside.

She could hear the record player in Peggy's room, and she was about to call upstairs that she was home but she didn't. She ought to eat something. She sliced cheese and ham and ate standing up. As she cut a piece of lime and filled a glass with ice she told herself to get sober before Lee came home; she poured the gin and tonic, her mind detached as though still deciding whether or not to drink it, then she went upstairs. Peggy's door was open, and she lay across her bed, reading a magazine. Beth turned down the volume on the record player and sat on the bed.

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"Where've you been?"

"Helen's."

"You better eat an onion before Daddy comes home."

She said it in a friendly way, smiling, and Beth winked. It was their first moment like that since going to the gynecologist.

"I guess I better. Is this what you've been doing?"

"Marsha and I played tennis."

"In this heat?"

"It gave me a headache."

"Did you take something?"

"Two aspirins. Marsha has a date, and we're doubling tonight."

"Does she?"

"I finally talked her into it. Vic'll be in Vietnam for a year and I told her, you know, it's just friendly dating to distract her. She needs it."

"Course she does."

Peggy closed the magazine and rolled on her back. Beth went to the window and looked past the elm down at the brick street.

"Peggy?" She did not turn from the window. "Was I wrong?"

"No."

Now she looked at Peggy on the bed.

"Is that true?"

"Yes."

"But you're not happy."

"That's not your fault."

"Then you're really not?"

"Not what."

"Happy."

"No. No, I'm not."

"Then I was wrong."

"No, it wasn't that. That was great. Anybody else's mother would have — I don't know, gone crazy or something. No, it's Bucky. I think I'm getting tired of him."

"Well that's normal."

"It doesn't have to be."

"But it is, honey. You're barely eighteen."

The record player shut itself off; Peggy got up and turned the records over and started it again.

"I'll be glad when school starts," she said.

"Because of Bucky?"

"Yes."

"Then I'll be glad too. But you could just tell him, you know. You don't have to wait till September."

"No, I'll wait."

"But be happy. Don't waste time."

Peggy shrugged and lay on the bed, one arm across her eyes.

"I'll wait till school. Maybe when I get out there I'll change my mind. You know: maybe I've just been with him too much this summer."

"Well, I'm glad you told me. I thought it was that other business."

"No. That was right."

"Do they make you sick?"

"Not so far."

"Good. I'm going to shower now. Will you — No: never mind."

Peggy moved her arm and looked at her.

"Will I what?"

"I was going to ask you to start the charcoal, but forget it. You rest and get over that headache."

"It's about gone."

She got up.

"No, I'll do it," Beth said.

"It's done," Peggy said, and left the room and went downstairs.

Beth left her drink on the lavatory while she showered. She was under the warm spray for a long time, finishing with a few seconds of cold; when she got out she felt better but still tight. She dried and powdered, then finished her drink while she dressed and perfumed in the bedroom. She wore a yellow dress, the color of lemon sherbet, soft and cool and pretty. She stood at the full length mirror: her face and arms were tan and cool-looking and she smelled good. Robert had thought she was pretty, she knew that. Then why had he let her catch that plane? Not that it would have made any difference. Not one bit of difference. She went downstairs and mixed a drink and went outside where Peggy sat in a lawnchair, watching the charcoal.

"Beautiful," Peggy said.

Beth went down the steps like a model, and in front of Peggy did a slow pirouette, then forced a short laugh that almost came out as a sob.

"And so are you," she said. "And I want you to be *ever* so happy!"

They sat with their legs in the sun, their bodies in the shade; when the shadows of the elm and house had enclosed their legs, Lee came home. By that time Beth was drunk.

Lee knew it, and she saw in his eyes that he knew it, but he didn't say anything. They ate barbecued chicken and baked beans and potato salad; Beth thought the food would make her sober, and she ate second helpings, and wiped the chicken platter with Italian bread. All this only cleared her head, but she still wasn't sober; faced with a waning drunk, she had to prolong it, so while she cleaned the kitchen she had another drink, knowing that behind his newspaper in the living room Lee was scowling at the sounds of ice cubes and stirring. When the kitchen was clean she took her drink outside and sat on a lawn chair. The sun was very low. Across the street beside the house Mrs. Crenshaw was bent over giving scraps to her dog; she straightened and waved. Then Mrs. Crenshaw went inside, and she was alone. It seemed a long time ago she had played checkers with Wendy under the willow tree. She looked over her shoulder at the house: Peggy's room was lighted, the shades drawn while she dressed for her date. The kitchen was lighted. So was the living room where Lee was reading. Beth looked away: everything was shadowed now, and there was a ribbon of deep bright pink over the rooftops to the west. With her back to the house she felt somehow threatened. But nothing was

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wrong: the kitchen was clean; Peggy's trouble was with Bucky, not her; Lee was sulking, but that was normal.

The sky was nearly dark when Bucky drove up the street. When he opened the door the interior light went on and Beth saw Marsha and a boy in the back seat. Bucky started across the lawn toward the front door, then he saw her and came over and said hello.

"Just go through the kitchen," she said. She looked up at Peggy's bedroom. "I think she's downstairs now."

She watched him go into the kitchen; then she heard him knocking on the wall and calling hello. She went to the car; Marsha rolled down the back window and Beth stuck her head in. She stayed there, talking about the heat and tennis with Marsha and the boy whose name she didn't hear, until Peggy and Bucky got into the car. She stepped back, and as they drove away she called: "Have fun!"

She went to the back door and into the kitchen. She was dropping ice in her glass when Lee came from the living room.

"No," he said.

She hesitated. Then, not looking at him, she squeezed lime into the glass.

"Jesus. Did you have to go out to the car too? Couldn't you have just stayed wherever the hell you were?"

"I wanted to tell Marsha hello. What's wrong with that?"

"What's *wrong*. You're so Goddamned drunk you don't even know. How do you think Peggy liked it? Her mother out there bellowing her Goddamned drunk talk all over the neighborhood —"

"I wasn't bellowing."

She poured the gin halfway up, then the tonic.

"You were. It's what you do when you're drunk, but you don't hear it."

"Oh. Well it's a good thing I'm not sober like you because you're bellowing a little bit yourself, and it's a good thing we're all closed up and air-conditioned or the whole neighborhood would hear *you*."

"That's your last drink tonight."

"Ha."

"I've tried to stay out of this, but not tonight."

"Ha. *They* can't hear you —" she waved an arm toward the windows "— but I can, and being closed up in a house with you *makes* me drink."

"Forget about me. I know how you feel about me. I'm talking —"

"Well I'm glad you know *some*thing."

"I'm talking about Peggy. You don't care about me and you don't care about yourself either. You're killing yourself with booze and cigarettes —"

"You're Goddamned right I am."

"— You don't sleep enough but won't go to a doctor. All right: that's *your* business. But it looks like you could at least stay sober while Peggy's home."

"Peggy. Oh you *really* don't know anything, you don't know anything at *all*. You don't know —"

She turned and walked fast to the back door, yet when she reached it the anger and speed of her motion were fake; she didn't want to leave, but when she looked back at him he was standing there shaking his head, his lips tight. So she went outside, where now the sky was dark. She stopped in the back yard and drank, went on to the garage and got into the Lincoln. The key was in the ignition. Holding the glass between her legs, she backed out, looking at the house as she passed it: she did not see Lee at the back door or the kitchen window or living room window. She stopped at the corner, looked both ways, then squealed through the intersection.

Her cigarettes were back there on the kitchen table or on the grass beside the lawn chair. She drove toward a super market that was open until nine; in the dark privacy and quiet hum of the car she felt all right; but walking into the fluorescent lights of the store she felt drunk again. The store was nearly empty, and boys were sweeping. She walked fast so she could follow a straight line, took two packs of Pall Malls from the rack and smacked them on the counter; while the girl rang up the sale Beth looked at the clock on the wall, then at her reflection in the glass front of the store. The girl could surely smell her breath but that was all right if you were dressed up and pretty and had a place to go. She picked up the change, told the girl goodnight, and walked out.

Her drink was on the floor near the accelerator, and now she held it down in her lap until she got out of the parking lot. The streets were lighted at every corner, and in the headlights of the spaced yet steady traffic you could see into cars. Just the sort of thing a cop would enjoy: stopping a lone woman on Saturday night. Hiding the cool glass between the steering wheel and her lap, she drove out of town, onto the highway going west to Helen's.

She finished the drink, tossed the ice and lime out the window, and laid the glass on the seat. On the next curve the glass rolled away from her; she lunged for it and the car veered into the opposite lane but it was clear and when she jerked the wheel she almost went onto the shoulder. She slowed to forty. At the white barn before Helen's road she slowed for a turn; she did not plan to stop at Helen's; she would simply drive past and follow the dirt road and see where it went. But she had left her lighter at home, she could go in and ask Helen if it was there and they'd look in the kitchen and living room and with a flashlight under the willow tree, then she could stay and talk. A half mile from Helen's she went up a gentle rise and saw the lighted house. She slowed to twenty, and going by the house she bent over and looked through the picture window: Helen stood in the living room, talking probably to Larry someplace off to the right. She drove on. She picked up a little speed, followed the beige road past dark fields of corn separating lighted farmhouses. She kept turning right, back toward the highway, and finally she came to it and headed for town. The drinks were wearing off and if she went to a movie now she'd get tired and her mouth and throat would dry. It was too late for a movie anyway.

Then, almost furtively, her right foot pressed the pedal while her left hand slipped down to her seat belt, un-

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buckled it, and returned to the wheel. She did not look at the speedometer: leaning forward, she watched the curves and gentle slopes ahead for the lights of another car. Coming out of a curve she floorboarded; the highway now was straight but narrow and she fixed her eyes on the center line. She must not hit anyone. She felt the dark flat country zipping past but she was afraid to look; once in a while there was the white blur of a house. A big truck came toward her and she held her breath and stared at the road as the truck crashed by. Now her legs were weak and the muscles in her right one were tight and quivering. Still she kept the pedal to the floor for another half minute, until she saw the close lights of houses. She lifted her foot and placed it on the floor near the brake pedal; when she reached the houses she was driving thirty miles an hour and thinking how pretty she looked in her bright yellow dress and weeping aloud. She drove home.

The lights were on in the living room; she sat in the car, in the garage, and smoked. She remembered the glass and lay on the seat and picked it up from the floor. She was down there when Lee spoke her name.

"Beth?" he said again.

She sat up and looked around at him framed by the garage door. She got out and started to walk past him; when he didn't move aside, she stopped.

"Are you all right?" he said.

She nodded.

"I went for a ride."

"Oh."

They walked back toward the house.

"I was worried," Lee said.

"I just went for a ride."

In the kitchen he watched her mix a drink, then he followed her into the living room. A movie was on television.

"What is it?" she said.

"*Pal Joey.*"

"Oh, good."

She sat in her chair; he sat in his and now the lampshade was between them so all he could watch was her hands while she drank. For about five minutes she watched the movie.

"What is it, honey?" he said.

"I don't know."

"Do you think maybe the change is coming?"

"No. Besides, the pills postpone it."

"Maybe it's coming, though."

"No it's not. I'll die of lung cancer, wearing a Tampax."

He was quiet for a while.

"About the drinking," he said.

"What about it?"

"Could you cut down if you wanted to?"

Sinatra was singing "I Could Write a Book."

"Wait," Beth said. "Let's hear this."

Then there was a commercial for laundry soap.

"Did you ever notice the commercials for Saturday night movies are mostly for women?" Beth said. "What do they think men are doing on Saturday night?"

"I don't know. Anyhow, what would happen if you told yourself you just won't have a drink till five o'clock? Would it be easy, or would you start climbing the walls, or what?"

"I don't know. I've never had a reason to try it. But since I'm such a lousy mother —"

"No, now wait." His hand gestured under the lampshade, stopping her. "I'm not talking about that. Forget all that. I just mean that if you can take it or leave it, well no problem. But if you can't, then you *are* in trouble and we should do something."

"Why?"

"Because you might be an alcoholic, that's why."

"Oh, all right. Tomorrow I won't have a drink till five o'clock."

"Really?"

"Sure."

"And Monday too? And after that?"

"Yes: Monday too and after that."

"That's fine. That's the best thing I've heard in a long time."

She could feel him watching the movie again.

"Is it? Well you're mighty easy to please. I guess if I quit smoking you'd be so happy you couldn't stand yourself."

"Why are you talking like that? The fight's over."

"Okay." She stood up. "I guess since I'm going to be so good tomorrow I can have another one."

"I'll have one too."

She brought him one. When the movie was over he stood up and cleaned his pipe.

"Coming up?" he said.

"I think I'll read a while."

He stood there for a moment, then said goodnight and went upstairs. She turned off the television and the lights and sat down again. It took her about fifteen minutes to admit she was hoping Peggy would come home while she was sitting here. Then she stalled for another five minutes, thinking of what she wanted to tell Peggy: that it was all right about Bucky, she was free of him and anyone else, she didn't have to marry until she was twenty-five or thirty, or maybe not at all. Then she went upstairs. When she entered the dark bedroom Lee rolled toward her, awake. She sat on the edge of the bed and touched him, then let him take off the yellow dress and drop it on the floor, and she let him believe the fight was over and everything was fine.

Next day Peggy and Bucky and Marsha and her date went on a picnic; Lee played golf. At three o'clock Beth started waiting and at exactly five o'clock she mixed a martini. When Lee got home she was sober.

5

This lasted until late August. It was neither difficult nor easy: it was a bother, like being hungry. Sometimes she broke her rule: when she drove out to Helen's or when a friend came over and bored her. Most of them did. She knew some interesting men but she only saw them at occasional parties when usually she was trapped by their

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wives. Polly Fairchild was good company only when she was troubled or confiding. So on afternoons when Polly came over Beth mixed them a drink and got Polly started on the war or Johnson. Or Beth would remark generally about marriage or changing morality, and Polly usually responded with gossip. She was an intelligent woman who paused to find the right word, the right simile, the psychological term, and she had a way of making gossip feel like an objective discussion of marriage and morality. But after these conversations, when Polly had gone, Beth always felt ashamed.

Most days, though, people did not visit, and she did not go to Helen's, and she did not drink until five o'clock. She spent much time with Peggy, planning what she would need at college, and shopping in town for clothes. They had lunches in town, or Cokes, or ice cream; once, their shopping done, they walked past a movie, looked at the pictures outside, agreed it was the best thing to do on a hot afternoon like this, and went in. Still, since telling Beth she was tiring of Bucky, Peggy had been different. She was friendly again, that was true; but she was like Helen after her marriage. Helen had come home from the honeymoon with a secret, married self that she would not expose to Beth. And now too often Peggy's eyes and smile hid a secret. She never talked about Bucky.

One cloudy morning in late August Peggy and Bucky left for a picnic. They went alone. Lee would not have approved, but he was at work. Beth had slept very little the night before, so when Peggy left around ten she went back to bed. When she woke at noon her room was dark and rain was falling hard. She dressed and went downstairs to the kitchen; while she was getting Spam and a Coke from the refrigerator Peggy called hello and came in from the living room. She was wearing her glasses.

"Oh, you came home. Is Bucky with you?"

"Nope."

"When did it start raining?"

"About an hour ago."

Beth poured the Coke over ice, sipped it, then handed it to Peggy.

"Here. You want this?"

Peggy took it.

"Why should I drink one of those things when what I really like after a nap is beer?"

"Drink a beer, then."

"I will. Now that I've proved I don't absolutely have to."

She opened a beer and started making a sandwich.

"Did you eat lunch?"

"Sitting in the car."

"Well, I like rain, but it's too bad." She went to the window and looked out at the dark sky and dark green blowing trees and hard rain washing down the brick street. "You could have brought him here, I guess."

"I can think of better people to be indoors with on a rainy day."

Beth went to the table and finished making the sandwich.

"Oh he was full of plans for a rainy afternoon. What he really wanted —"

"Wait: let's go to the living room. We can open the windows."

They turned off the air conditioner, opened the windows facing the front yard, and sat smelling the rain and cool air. Beth was in her chair and Peggy faced her from the couch.

"A motel," Peggy said. "That's where he wanted to go. Can you imagine anyone letting him into a motel? He hardly even shaves yet."

Beth waited.

"What a little rooster he is," Peggy said. "His girl takes the pill — wow."

"Why don't you stop?"

"And have a little Bucky? I'd rather die."

"No, I mean stop seeing him."

"Because — oh because I just can't. I wish —" She stretched out on the couch and turned her face away from Beth, toward the open window.

"You wish what?"

"Nothing."

"No, tell me."

Peggy was still looking out the window.

"I wish you *had* taken me away. Even if it would've been phony. I wish you had."

Rain smacked loudly from the gutter near the porch. The windows were under the porch roof, so only the breeze came in; the curtains stirred and Peggy's exhaled smoke drifted back into the room.

"But then you wouldn't have learned anything," Beth said.

"Learned. What have I learned?"

"That you don't love him. That it wasn't real. If I had taken you away for one of those trips you'd have thought you were heartbroken."

"I *did* love him."

"I don't think so."

"Course I did." She looked at Beth. "For God's sake, I *slept* with him."

"That doesn't mean anything."

"Then what *does?*"

"I don't know."

"You don't."

"No."

"That's fine."

"Did you want me to lie to you? Tell you a love story?"

Peggy shook her head. Beth brought her plate and empty beer can to the kitchen.

"Do you want a beer?" she called.

"No."

She opened one for herself. For a couple of minutes in the living room she sat quietly drinking, looking past Peggy's lowered head at the rain and dark outside. A car passed slowly up the street.

"Why don't you just break up with him. Right now, baby."

Peggy shook her head.

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"Really, baby. Him and his motels. You're right. he's a child. He's not good enough for you."

"He was good enough to get pills for."

"They weren't for him. They were for you."

"So I could *sleep* with him. So now I just can't stop, because — Because then —"

She looked up at the high ceiling.

"You've got it all wrong," Beth said. "I wanted to make sure you *wouldn't* be stuck with him, that's why, so you'd be free. So you wouldn't have to take sex seriously."

"*Jee*sus." She sat up, glaring at Beth. "It's the most important thing in my *life* right now, don't you see!" Now she stood, leaning forward, waving a hand. "Don't you see that? Because as soon as I break up with Bucky I'm a girl who *screws*. Don't you see!"

Beth was pushing herself upward to go hold Peggy, but then she stopped, for she knew Peggy would be stiff and captive in her arms, so she sank back into the chair and with one hand over her eyes softly cried.

"Don't," Peggy said. She was there now, crouched over Beth, squeezing one shoulder. "It's not your fault."

"It *is*." Her hand still covered her eyes. "But I didn't mean it to be *this* way. I just didn't want you to end up like *me*."

"Like you?"

Peggy stepped back. Beth flicked tears from her eyes, wiped her cheeks, and looked up.

"Wasted like me. Unhappy like me. *Mar*ried like me."

"Oh —"

"Don't you *know?*"

"No." Shaking her head. "I don't. I didn't." Shaking it again.

"Well now you do. I wish it weren't true, but it is. Not just me, everyone. If you don't believe me ask Helen. Drive out there and talk to her, she'll talk. Not now, the roads are muddy, but before you go to school. Or just look at her. Look at her face that used to be so *ha*ppy, Peggy. Remember? Remember how happy she always was?"

Peggy was nodding, backing toward the couch; when her legs bumped it she sat down.

"Look at her eyes now. It's not just tired, that's not just housework in her eyes. Oh my baby save yourself —" She crossed the room and sat beside Peggy, hugging and rocking her with both arms. "You should hear Polly Fairchild, the stories, all these nice people. It's a farce, love, marriage, fidelity —" Peggy jerked tight in her arms. "— No. No, baby, I've never done that. But it doesn't *mat*ter. None of it *mat*ters."

"But Daddy —"

"Oh, he's all right, baby. He's a good man. It's just natural, that's all. It just happens, and there's nothing anyone can do about it."

Peggy's face turned away and her body turned with it, pulling against Beth's arms. Beth let go.

"Are you getting divorced?"

"*No*, baby." Beth held her again but still Peggy was turned stiffly away, so Beth went to the chair and picked up the beer and swallowed with her back turned. "No, we're not getting divorced. We can live together like anyone else. We don't hate each other. It's just that nothing's there, and this was supposed to be my life. Every woman's life. But it's not. You and Helen are, and now Wendy and Billy too. But you and Helen have to grow up and have your own lives and that's how it should be. But it shouldn't be this way for me. There should have been something else."

"For *in*stance!"

Looking at the wall ahead of her, Beth shrugged; there were tears in her eyes.

"I don't know, and it's too late for it to matter even if I found out. But it's not too late for you. You're young. It's all ahead of you."

Then Peggy was moving fast, to the kitchen door, stopping there, turning to Beth.

"Oh *why* did you come in that night! Why! Why! Why didn't you just stay upstairs and mind your own ugly *bus*iness!"

Then crying, her head lifted, her clenched fists at her sides, she strode out of the room and pounded up the stairs.

6

On the trip from Iowa to Massachusetts Peggy sat in the back seat with her transistor radio. The college had sent her a summer reading list; she was not going to be tested; it was simply a list of books they wanted her to read. She started the first one, *The Great Gatsby*, as soon as they left Iowa City. During most of the trip Lee spoke very little; he did not even object when Beth put an ice chest of beer on the floor behind the front seat, or when three or four times a day she drank one as they drove. He had been sulking since coming home that rainy day nearly three weeks ago. He had come into the living room where Beth was watching Merv Griffin (before that she had watched a movie; Peggy stayed upstairs and did not come down until dinner); Lee had said hello, looked quickly but closely at her face, then her gin-and-tonic, then the filled ash tray.

"What happened to five o'clock?"

"Just be quiet. I'm not in the mood for that."

"Mood hell —"

"I mean it." Watching the screen she motioned at him to be quiet. "Besides, Peggy's upstairs."

He started to speak, then shook his head and went upstairs to change clothes. At dinner there was little talk. Peggy and Lee commented on the rain, and Vic's having been in Vietnam for nearly a month now, and Lee said Bucky had better work for grades and stay in school. They knew she was drunk, and she knew they did, but she acted sober anyway. She ate quietly and slowly and carefully. After dinner Peggy went out with Bucky. Then Lee wanted to talk.

"Was it because you had to? You couldn't stop?"

"No."

"You just wanted to."

"That's right. I just wanted to."

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That was all she ever told him. Several times he tried to talk again, but she would not. Finally he gave up. It was a problem he could forget most of the time, because she was not drunk again. She simply drank as she had before. Usually she had one before taking the cleaning woman home; by the time Lee got home she was having her third or fourth. But she was all right: her mind and tongue functioned, she cooked, she cleaned the kitchen after dinner, she paid the bills, she kept track of their engagements, and once a week she drove the Volkswagen to a service station and had it washed. Most nights she drank through dinner and on until she went to bed, but she sipped and spaced them and always appeared sober.

Luckily the shopping for Peggy was done, so they had no reason to be together. Peggy spent most of her time out of the house; during the day she swam or played tennis or rode at the stables or just drove about town with the girls she would leave in September. At night she went out with Bucky. When Beth walked them to the door or told them goodnight from her chair, Peggy looked at her with eyes that were at times coldly curious, at others bitterly defiant, at others mirthful and proud. Each day there were times when they had to talk, and they did this in the hollow courteous tones of lovers after a rending quarrel. Beth waited.

Then in early September, Peggy began to mellow. She spent more time with Beth. She did not truly talk to her; instead they did things together. After dinner Peggy helped in the kitchen. One night they went to a movie. On several afternoons they played badminton or croquet. These periods were obviously planned, some of them even timed: if Marsha were picking up Peggy for tennis, she would be ready an hour early and set up the wickets and stakes and ask Beth to play. At first Beth was hopeful. When she realized Peggy was acting from pity she knew she had lost her.

The college was north of Boston. It was a school for girls, it was a hundred and fifty-eight years old, and so was the four-storied red brick building where, on the front steps among suitcases and trunks, daughters and parents, and maintenance men serving as porters, they kissed and hugged Peggy, spoke of Thanksgiving, and told her goodbye. She stood watching as they drove out of the U-shaped driveway; when they stopped at the street for a final look, she waved. Then Lee drove into the street, toward the low autumn sun. With one finger he wiped his eyes, reached across the seat, and took Beth's hand.

"Our baby," he said.

"I lost her long before now," she said, and withdrew her hand.

"What's that supposed to mean?"

"She hates me."

"Beth!"

"It's true."

"Beth look — that's crazy. Look —"

"Sure."

He was not angry. He was chewing his lip, and the car was slowing.

"How can you say that about Peggy? What's *wrong*, Beth —"

"Oh you don't know anything. You know that? You don't know anything."

She kneeled on the seat to get a beer, pausing first to watch his face. "Have you ever been unfaithful?"

"My God."

She leaned over the seat and reached into the ice chest.

"I have," she said.

"That's a lie."

She sat down and popped open the beer. They were on the highway now. She looked out the rear window, then took a long swallow.

"Ah, that's good."

She pushed in the lighter on the dashboard.

"Drink as many as you want," he said. "I mean it."

"I know you do."

"You need it. Something's happening to you, and we've got to —"

"His name is Robert Carini."

"Stop it."

She lit her cigarette.

"He's a silversmith and he lives in New York. He promised to send me a bracelet but he didn't. What's the name of yours? Or is it more than one. It probably is."

"Beth, stop."

"You don't believe me, do you?"

"Course not."

"That's so funny. Because you had everything worked out so we wouldn't die on the same plane. You see? There's all sorts of things out there —" She waved her beer can in front of her, toward the horizon "— *im*pulses, chances, surprises, things nobody understands. But you don't see them, Lee."

They were driving through rolling wooded hills; the trees were gold and red and yellow, and looking at them with one hand raised to shield her eyes from the sun she felt a sadness like nostalgia.

"Are you telling me that something happened in San Francisco?"

"No. On the plane back."

"That's silly."

"Well you're right about that, I didn't sleep with him. But I would have, so it's the same."

"Since when is it the same?"

"Since always. And I talked about you."

"Oh you did."

"I couldn't have been more unfaithful. Think about that, Lee: one afternoon last summer your wife was unfaithful."

"I wouldn't call it that."

"Call it what you want, but that's what it was."

She leaned over the seat again, put the empty can in the chest, and brought a full one up through the ice.

"So what about you," she said.

He didn't answer; with one hand he was filling a pipe from his tobacco pouch.

"All right," she said. "We can talk about scenery and traffic."

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He drove quietly. She finished the beer and started another. There were nine left. Tomorrow she would buy more and she would drink from Massachusetts to Iowa. That amused her: how many people had drunk beer from the Atlantic — or ten miles from it anyway — right into the heart of the country? Now off the highway there were stores and shopping centers and the traffic was heavier. When they got into the country again Beth looked out her window at colored leaves and green pines and spruce; the sun was setting, and the sky was rose and orange above the trees; she saw stone fences and sometimes a large house built far back from the road; twice she saw a single white boulder in meadows that were light green in the sun and dark green in the reaching shadows of the woods. When the sun went down she said: "Can you keep driving? Or are you tired?"

"I'm not tired."

"Good. Cars are nice at night."

It was dusk now, so she could not see colors anymore, and she wanted dusk to change quickly to night so she could ride in the dark car with only the faint green light of the dashboard and red tail lights far ahead and pale headlights well on the other side of the divided highway.

"Are you hungry?" he said.

"No. Are you?"

"Not yet."

"We can eat later, then drive some more."

"All right," he said.

"I'm going to do it differently now, since Peggy's gone. I'm not going to bed anymore until I'm really sleepy. Then I'll get up and give you breakfast and then I'll go back to bed and sleep till noon or so. I can do that now."

"I guess you can."

"It's what I'll do. I'll read a lot."

"Yes."

"You were right not to tell me, though. About other women. Because it doesn't matter. That's what no one admits, that it doesn't matter. Course when you didn't answer, that means you have, doesn't it?"

"Yes."

"Really? I thought so."

Her voice sounded strange in her throat. Then she was looking out the window at trees that were darker than the sky and she was crying and she could not stop.

"— Under*stand*," he was saying. "You *want*ed me to say it, so what is it now?"

She was shaking her head, her hands covering her face.

"Because it does matter and it doesn't matter and it does matter. Because I hate you and I hate me. And that's not true either, there's nothing true —" She lowered herself onto the seat, on her side, her head close to Lee. "Oh Lee," she said into the leather upholstery, "when I die —"

"Hush now." He patted her arm. "Hush now, don't say that."

"You take that ten thousand dollars and you and Peggy go on a nice long trip, to Europe or someplace."

Then, to save them both from having to talk, she opened her mouth and breathed softly and pretended she was asleep. After a few minutes he took the beer can from her loose fingers, drank what was left, and lowered the can to the floor.

STANLEY PLUMLY

THE ARGUMENT

We're tired. We've talked
and talked. We've winded even this.
Our thinking's frail and dark.
We've worn each other out, talking,
and out of breath, we touch and kiss.

Once out of mind, I'm told, words
walk on air, dust lifting in light, ephemeral.
But write them down: they'll talk longer there.
I write this down and wonder if you hear.
I write this down and this and this.

Make word be flesh within your listening ear.

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Guest on a 15-day "barnstorming" tour of new cities in London, Stockholm, Helsinki, Leningrad, Moscow, and Paris, the author arrived home late last fall to ponder the lessons of the journey. Specifically, how much can the 110 American cities to be built by the year 2000 profit from European models? Accompanied by his wife, Marcy, Woods kept a journal of the tour; its first entries appear below, and will be concluded in the summer NAR. *Woods teaches at Wilmington (Ohio) College.*

William K. Woods

AN URBANOLOGIST'S NOTEBOOK

Saturday, October 4—Thanks to a time interval between plane connections, Marcy and I spent the afternoon in Manhattan. Lindsay workers passed out buttons and solicited money on various street corners. Watching them made me feel guilty. Since I earn part of my income analysing American urban problems, I looked on myself as an escapist who was fleeing to Europe in the midst of municipal campaigns that threatened the careers of men like Lindsay and Carl Stokes.

A trip to the Museum of Modern Art put us in an existential mood. Thousands of kids milled about in their costumes. We speculated that most of them worked all morning to perfect these styles. Tom Wolfe might describe this scene as *The Park Avenue Hippie Saturday Afternoon Happening Thing-Outasight.* As we stood in this crowd viewing plastic and vinyl food by Claes Oldenburg, we heard comments like: "That's *really* valid for our time."

Later we arrived at the Air India Lounge at Kennedy Airport for a pre-flight reception for our tour. Since we were early, we experienced the phenomenon of watching the room fill up with fifty urbanologists. A review of the occupations of tour members revealed that eight architects, five housing specialists, three urban consultants, three real estate brokers, three clergymen, two public officials, three construction executives, four neighborhood community leaders, one NAACP official, four academicians, one public relations man, one landscape architect, two War on Poverty agents, two journalists, six planners, one naturalist, and one attorney were making this tour. Looking over this room full of cocktail-drinking city specialists made me contemplate the age old puzzle of how many urbanologists can dance on the head of a skyscraper.

Sunday, October 5—We arrived in London Sunday morning. It was our day to relax; we visited friends who live in an apartment in a seventeenth century row house near Regent's Park. It was a warm afternoon; we strolled about the walled park reserved for people in their neighborhood, and we walked several more blocks to look at the flowers in Regent's Park itself. Hordes of people were out enjoying the sun. So many prams rolled along, that a traffic directing nanny would have been helpful.

Monday, October 6—By 8:30 a.m. our bus pulled away from the hotel. Stephen Osgood, an architect and planner with a private firm in London, talked to us over a microphone from his seat in the front of the bus. As we rolled through downtown and suburban London, he outlined Britain's post-War program of new town construction. We were enroute to see two of the twenty-seven communities launched by the Government after the passage of the New Towns Act of 1946.

Osgood noted that he is one of the architects involved in planning Milton Keynes, a city of 250,000 to be built fifty miles north of London. Such a project extends the population size of the first towns. Since the original towns proved that such communities can succeed, Government officials plan for larger cities to absorb the population growth around London. Southeastern England lures people from all over Britain just as America's eastern seaboard attracts migrants. Presently, England's new towns account for less than five per cent of the nation's new housing. "To avoid sprawl," Osgood said, "it became a necessity to build cities that would accommodate more than 60,000 people."

As we began to pass through a rural stretch of land, our guide informed us that we were in the green belt. This eight-to-twelve mile ring around London cannot be used for commercial, residential or industrial purposes. Small farms, open fields, and woods share this land. Legislators who passed the green belt law in the early 1950's viewed it as part of a strategy to control

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London's megalopolis situation. Questioned about the permanence of the green belt, Osgood guessed that after surviving several early assaults, the law was now accepted by the public.

Someone asked Osgood about his training as an architect and planner. He replied that he received his planning degree from Harvard-M.I.T. This seemed ironic. American universities abound with able teachers of architecture and planning, but their ideas don't carry much weight outside of the groves of academe. As Osgood cheerily discussed his education and career, I guessed that his attitude must be: "The U.S. is a nice place to visit, but I wouldn't want to plan there."

After an hour-and-a-half on the road, we arrived at Welwyn Gardens City. As we drove through a neighborhood that matched my imagined picture of an English village, I realized that Welwyn was an ideal place to begin a tour of new communities. Welwyn Gardens was the project of Ebenezer Howard, the prophet of the new city movement. Viewing London's congested housing and random growth of the 1890's, this journalist-inventor conceived the notion of finding a series of economically self-supporting centers of a limited size that would utilize landscaping techniques and natural surroundings for the benefit of their populations. In 1902, he proposed his plan for easing the pressures of old cities in *Garden Cities of Tomorrow*. By enlisting support from disciples, Howard was able to launch a garden city called Letchworth in 1904. Welwyn Gardens was Howard's second venture.

A few minutes later, we sat sipping tea in a conference room while Sir Frederick Osborne outlined the history of Welwyn. Sir Frederick, a convert to Howard's new town doctrine in the early 1900's, explained that Howard bought the chunk of land where Welwyn stands at an auction in 1919. Howard then drafted Osborne and other garden city advocates to help him plan, finance, and administer this project. Since they were unwilling to compromise their social and physical plans to make money, Osborne confided that their company found it hard to finance home building and to lure industries to locate in Welwyn. Nevertheless, by the 1930's, their town began to thrive.

I sat listening to this new town pioneer. Although an old man, Sir Frederick is witty, articulate, spry. Here is a person who can look back with pride at his life's work. Osborne wrote a book in 1919 calling for the government to sponsor new cities. One war later, he saw his government pass the legislation that he had proposed twenty-seven years earlier. Now, as we questioned him about the wisdom of constructing private ventures in America, he advised us to "get on with it." Make a start, concluded Osborne. If you prove that it's feasible, the government will come along later and bail you out.

Brigadier M. W. Biggs lectured us about Welwyn today. The government bought Welwyn Gardens from the original company in 1946. Using the garden city as a base, the government's development corporation expanded its residential and industrial sections until it concluded, in 1966, that Welwyn's growth was sufficient. Presently comprised of 43,000 people, Welwyn's population will be allowed to reach 50,000. Under New Town legislation, the original development corporations assigned to plan and build the communities disband when the town's facilities are completed. Since the government remains the owner of all land in these centers, a Commission for the New Towns was created to manage the government's assets and to plan for potential changes in land use. Brigadier Biggs was hired by the Commission to manage its interests in Welwyn.

Biggs, a tall, confident-looking gentleman in horn-rimmed glasses, seemed to run his town with all the gusto and efficiency of a soldier-aristocrat. Trained as an engineer, Biggs administered all building for the Army before he came to Welwyn. I speculated that Biggs' career indicated that England's upper-classes could weather the transition from Empire builders to domestic builders. The Brigadier might be called the Lord Kitchener of the new towns. A few of the black community leaders detected the Brigadier's *noblesse oblige* attitude when he discussed recruiting members of London's working class for available jobs and homes at Welwyn. Many of the audience looked doubtful when Biggs described his smooth working relations with Welwyn's elected town council.

We toured this garden city by bus. The town consists of a series of residential clusters. Although a bus connects every section to the city center, each cluster possesses a few shops, a church, and a pub. Little space separates houses and apartments, but boulevards and plantings prevent the monotony of a line of buildings. Limiting the space between houses allows for more parks, woods and recreation areas. Welwyn's founders and today's officials project a ratio of thirty acres of public space for every thousand residents. Since they were complemented by a fuller array of mature trees, bushes, and flowers, I preferred the red brick cottages and row house apartments of the original neighborhoods in the southwest to the post-1948 developments in the southeast section. About fifty per cent of the families rent their homes and apartments, while the other half own their homes.

Segregated from residential patterns, the industrial section occupies a chunk of land east of the railroad tracks. Familiar names like Nabisco and Xerox caught my eye as we drove through this area. Approximately 18,000 people work in the one hundred factories based in Welwyn. Because Welwyn's officials match prospective residents with suitable available jobs, the city's unemployment rate is tiny.

We motored on to another new town in time for lunch. We disembarked at the Saxon Inn in Harlow, a community located in the rolling countryside between London and Cambridge. We lubricated our systems with sherry, Yorkshire pudding, and well done roast beef before the next presentation by new town officials. I ate lunch with Samuel Pepys, Harlow's public relations man. He claimed to be a direct descendant of the seventeenth

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century diarist; I wondered if his famous ancestor would approve of a Pepys writing glossy press releases about new towns instead of chronicling court gossip.

L. E. White, the Harlow Development Corporation liaison officer, a jovial man who looked like Harold Wilson, gave a brief talk about his town's history while we finished our ice cream. Harlow began from scratch in 1948, and White warned us not to compare Welwyn's landscaping with this project's. He emphasized Harlow's young population. Forty per cent of its people were under fifteen years old. Newly married couples move to new towns in order to provide a healthy environment for their children, and this leaves communities like Harlow without a normal proportion of elderly and middle-aged citizens. White acknowledged that officials were attempting to correct this imbalance by building accommodations to house retired parents of Harlow's residents. He admitted that Harlow didn't possess a diverse mix of social groups and, since factories provide the bulk of Harlow's jobs, that its working class population swells, while the poor and the rich fail to find a niche in the town.

Someone quizzed White about "the new town blues" syndrome. Ready for this question, the liaison officer admitted that certain people did become bored or depressed because of a lack of diversions and entertainment in Harlow. To overcome the dearth of professional sports and cultural activities, residents forged a slew of "do-it-yourself" programs. One-hundred-fifty amateur football clubs existed in Harlow. White credited citizen initiative for creating a community spirit.

We soon boarded our bus for a cruise around Harlow. Planned for a population of 80,000, this town shelters about 77,000 residents. It is platted on 6,400 acres, and its planners left large open areas separating the four residential sections. Although I could appreciate the social planning that insures that residents are within walking distance of schools, shops, churches, medical facilities, and recreation areas, I gave Harlow low marks for its lack of aesthetic qualities. On many streets, I felt as if I was travelling through a middle-class suburb. We coasted by rows of uninspired box creations sitting on land still recovering from the bulldozer's gouges. Many apartments looked institutional, and the city center reminded me of a typical shopping center. An atmosphere of Woolworth's and stale french fries permeated Harlow's downtown.

In fairness, I must cite the architectural diversity within the town. Every neighborhood reflects a different style. I saw everything from red brick cottages in the Welwyn tradition to factory-constructed apartments. Fourteen per cent of Harlow's current projects utilize a factory system of building. We stopped to inspect an apartment complex nicknamed "the Kasbah." Designed to separate automobile traffic from ground level activities, the building has a basement level for parking. Its stark exterior made it look rather like a deserted temple. A child on a scooter and a dog emerging from an apartment added a small touch of life to the scene.

I sorted over my impressions of the two new towns on the ride back to London. Harlow and Welwyn weren't utopias. I found many things to criticize about Harlow. Nevertheless, both communities were greater than their individual features. I might thumb my nose at certain houses in Harlow, but these units were tied to a community plan that gave its residents more services than an isolated neighborhood in America. Judged by utopian standards, Welwyn and Harlow fail. If, however, one compares American's suburbs and inner cities with them, the English new towns look good.

London offers the social diversity, culture, and entertainment of an old but vital world capital. At an Indian restaurant that evening, I made the mistake of ignoring the waiter's advice not to order the hot curry. "Give me your hot curry," I ordered. "I like hot food." This probably provided the restaurant's employees with a month's worth of laughs. Later, I imagined the chef muttering: "He wants hot curry. I'll give him something to tell the Rotary Club in Muncie about." By the second act of *She Stoops to Conquer*, I was no longer breathing smoke.

Tuesday, October 7—A glance at our schedule informed us that we were off for a morning visit to Thamesmead, a new community planned for 60,000 on the periphery of London. Since Thamesmead lies to the east on the south bank of the river, we stopped at Greenwich to admire the Queen's House designed by Inigo Jones and the Royal Naval College fashioned by Christopher Wren. Viewing these seventeenth century structures overlooking the Thames gave us a bit of perspective for analyzing a project that many planners herald as a model for late twentieth century developments.

Except for a line of duplex apartments that confronted us upon our arrival, everything in the area retained that temporary quality that characterizes construction sites. We filed into a small building that served as a visitor's quarters. A huge model plan of Thamesmead was enclosed in a glass covered display table. Mr. I. Debowski, a heavy set young architect from the staff of the Greater London Council, described this project for us.

The Farsta (Sweden) shopping center

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The Greater London Council constitutes the governing body of greater London and accepts responsibility for providing housing for the citizens of this metropolis. A housing shortage coupled with London's congested and deteriorating residential areas produced a need for a project of Thamesmead's scope. Much of Thamesmead's 1,600 acre site was previously undeveloped due to its marshy character. Despite the difficulties of building on soft ground, the opportunities to plan a community on open land with four miles of river front inspired the GLC architects.

Debowski explained how their plan took advantage of the frontage on the Thames. A marina, a pedestrian promenade, and other facilities will be built so that residents can enjoy the river. As a visual effect and as an effort to segregate auto and foot traffic, motorways will be flanked by canals.

Planners turned the hindrance of building on marsh land into an asset. Since laws prohibit using ground levels in swampy areas for first floor living space, the GLC architects devised buildings that separate the automobile from pedestrian and play areas. The ground floor is kept for parking, while a series of second floor terraces connected by stairs and elevated walkways isolates residents from auto traffic.

The GLC finances all current construction at Thamesmead. As owner of the buildings, the Council will rent apartments and houses according to the needs of those Londoners registered for a new dwelling. The GLC hopes that about thirty-five per cent of Thamesmead's future housing will be built by private developers who agree to meet GLC specifications.

Providing jobs for residents remains a goal. Two hundred acres of land are set aside for industrial use. By coupling employment opportunities with high standards of physical and social planning, the Council hopes to attract a potpourri of groups and classes to their new town *in* town.

Debowski led us on a walking tour of one of the residential complexes. We examined a linear construction that consisted of double-decker duplex apartments stacked onto a ground level structure that served as a garage and a storage area. Visual monotony was avoided by contrasting the rectangular lines of the apartments with a variety of outward jutting porches and terraces. Every other building connected in this structure rose to a different height.

Architects designed these apartments so that bathrooms and kitchens face the road, while bedrooms overlook an interior court. Each resident can reach any level by using a series of interior and exterior stairways. The inner courtyards serve as gardens and children's play areas. I liked this physical form, and I was astounded by the amount of social and physical planning that these architects incorporated into their blueprints.

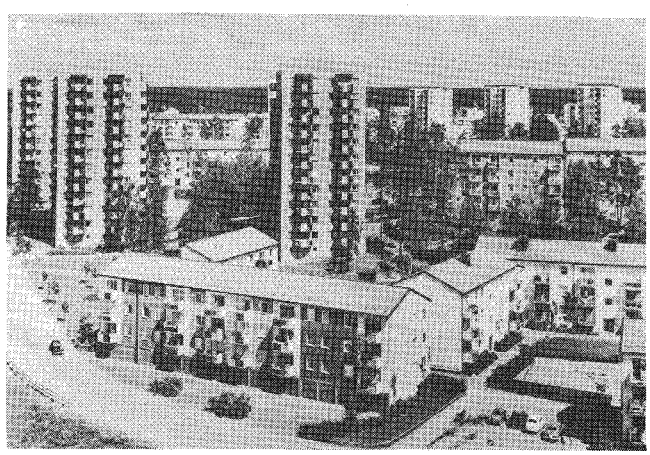
Besides the duplexes, Thamesmead developers mix two other building designs into their residential pattern. Three story row houses comprise a majority of residential units now standing. Studies indicate that mothers and children suffer in a high rise environment; for this reason, GLC planners decided to build numbers of three floor apartments. A limited number of thirteen floor apartment towers complement the three- and five-story housing, for single people and couples without children often prefer life in the skyscraper.

The Council employs a novel approach in constructing its project. A factory on Thamesmead's site manufactures the pieces that make up the finished building. Huge cranes then lift these pieces into place. Known as the "systems approach," this method turns the building industry into a true industry. Utilizing factory methods and standardized parts, systems building requires fewer men, and a structure can be assembled in a shorter time. On a fifteen-year project like Thamesmead, systems building will probably reduce costs.

We visited the factory. Inside this cavernous building, men and machines concocted huge concrete wall slabs fitted with window frames, plumbing, electrical conduits and heating mechanisms. What was most amazing to me was the fact that factory produced parts could be combined to form a final product that stands as an interesting piece of architecture and a pleasant place to live.

After an afternoon in search of Becket's London, Christopher Wren's London, and Dr. Johnson's London, Marcy and I rushed to a reception that Urban America arranged for English officials involved with new towns and Thamesmead. A panel discussion led by English architects and planners was in progress when we arrived. The question and answer session stimulated some interesting debates between tour members and the panel. The English tradition of deference to experts confronted America's distrust of official decisions. William Lockert, a non-profit housing director, and Junius Williams, a planner from Newark, probed away at the issue of participatory democracy and planning. The panel admitted that planning remained a monopoly of Development Corporation officials until residents moved into

The Stockholm suburb of Vällingby



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the towns and began to make their desires known. The Englishmen seemed a bit miffed by all this talk about Establishment decisions.

English planners confided that the new towns lured working class and middle class immigrants. Jobs for middle bureaucrats and workers existed, but these centers possessed few programs for the poor. This disclosure that the English towns weren't created to eliminate poverty disgruntled many tour members. The panelists argued that new towns in England were part of a strategy to build new housing without producing sprawl. Wasn't such a goal applicable to our situation? It also seemed apparent that new communities could fulfill different national needs.

Wednesday, October 8—Since I had been there on a previous trip, I felt blasé about London. Sweden was new territory for me. As we approached the Stockholm airport, we could see forests of fir and birch trees below. The air felt cool as we descended the plane's steps.

Campbell Cyrus, Urban America's man in Sweden, greeted us as we checked through customs. Cyrus, an American architect who migrated to Sweden ten years ago, wasted no time in herding us onto the buses for an afternoon tour of Stockholm's sub-centers. As we roared past acres of white birches and various lakes, a Swedish lady guide lectured us about modern Sweden. My mind wandered as I scanned the scenery.

Our first stop was Vällingby, a community about eight miles west of downtown Stockholm. At first glance, I thought that I was back in an American shopping center. A closer examination revealed some differences. Stores were clustered about a plaza, but a series of benches arranged around two circular pools with fountains made this area more than a market place. Street lamps shaped to resemble pieces of modern sculpture and a pavement designed with small pieces of stone are touches that one seldom finds in an American center. Looming behind the two-story stores were four or five apartment buildings.

A dark red church stood at one corner of the plaza. Marcy and I went inside. The interior was simple in design. A huge block of granite sculpted into a baptismal font occupied the back of the church. Outside we found the two architects from Washington taping an interview with two teenage girls. The girls complained that there wasn't enough action for them in Vällingby. They liked to go to Stockholm to dance and to drink. One teenager strolled by wearing an Eldridge Cleaver button.

I asked our guide when Vällingby was built. She replied that the center was finished in 1954. About 12,000 people live within walking distance of this center, she added.

The next stop on our tour was Täby, an autonomous municipality within the Stockholm metropolitan area. This city had embarked on its own building program. We tramped through an unfinished apartment which looked like a typical highrise to me, but I lack an architect's perspective. I couldn't conjure up a picture of the final product.

Täby's two-floor indoor shopping center disappointed me. It reminded me of an indoor mall in Cincinnati. Even the pennants hanging from the balcony for decoration looked like gas station frills. I amused myself by trying to figure out the plot of a Donald Duck comic book written in Swedish.

It was late in the afternoon and dark by the time we rolled away from the Täby shopping center. We made one more stop before motoring into Stockholm. Suddenly an enormous circular apartment complex confronted us. It pleased me, architecturally, but it looked too huge for people to live in. In front of this apartment stood a hillside park of five or six acres. Marcy and I hiked up the hill, thrilled to be among all the white birches and fir trees. I concluded that residents in the building below couldn't feel too atomized. They can restore their souls by roaming around in this woodland area.

Built on a series of inter-connected islands, Stockholm strikes one as a beautiful city by day or by night. The lights of its buildings reflected off the water as we drove to the hotel. Our guide told us that Stockholm's topography caused unique transportation problems. With a huge population rise in the metropolitan area, Stockholm's leaders realized that their island city couldn't accommodate a similar increase in automobiles. They conjured up images of day-long traffic jams clogging the network of bridges. Before their visions turned to reality, the city fathers embarked on a project to connect every suburban area to a mass transit line. How utopian, I mused. Wouldn't it be simpler to eliminate the waterways with fill so that turnpikes could be built?

We attended a reception for Swedish planners and architects that evening. After dinner, Marcy and I and several other tour members were about to leave for a stroll around the city when Campbell Cyrus stopped me. He asked me to stay to see the two films on Sweden. He talked with such intensity that he made me feel that missing these movies was like walking away from a religious experience. I couldn't refuse this American missionary for the Swedish system. Produced by the Swedish Institute, the films dealt with Sweden's industrialization and urbanization, and they portrayed this country's evolution toward programs to channel these forces creatively. Although I hardly felt like Paul on the road to Damascus, the movies impressed me.

We spent several hours roaming through the maze of winding narrow streets in Stockholm's medieval district. Hundreds of shops stocked with specialty items and luxury goods house themselves in the old buildings. Like similar quarters in Florence, this area retains its historic atmosphere, but it remains a bustling shopping and entertainment center. Keeping an old section as an integral part of a modern city's functions makes more sense than turning it into an outdoor museum.

Thursday, October 9—Today I became a believer in Sweden's approach to planning. The visual evidence to document Sweden's success in forging reasonable programs to insure beauty and social amenities for all citi-

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zens in an urban setting was sufficient to blow the mind of an urban historian accustomed to chaos, ugliness and social decay. Our morning agenda began with a visit to the Town Planning Center.

Thomas Eltmer, an architect on the City Planning staff, addressed us. After describing Stockholm's post-war problems, he outlined the city's and the region's responses to them. Confronted by a housing shortage after World War II, Greater Stockholm's population actually dipped slightly after it reached 807,000 in 1960, but the metropolitan area swelled with more than 20,000 new people per year in the Sixties. People in such numbers created a need for housing, transportation, and other facilities.

Stockholm couldn't dictate a regional plan, because thirty autonomous municipalities existed in the metropolitan area. After constant discussions and compromises and an accumulation of piecemeal agreements, Stockholm and her sister communes possess an institution called the Greater Stockholm Council which will assume responsibilities for regional planning, recreation, sewerage, housing, transportation, health care, and secondary education for the region. Officials pieced together this form of metropolitan government from the various arrangements that Stockholm made over the years with her sister municipalities to plan and coordinate individual problems like housing and transportation.

The slow evolution toward metropolitan government represents only one phase of Stockholm's drive to avoid megalopolis. Eltmer discussed the plans that Stockholm could and did implement without cooperation from surrounding communes. As early as 1904, Stockholm's officials embarked on a policy of buying rural and suburban land for the city's future use. By purchasing chunks of property and renting them for agricultural purposes, the city fathers insured that their city owned territory for expansion. Stockholm's sub-centers, Vällingby, Farsta and Skärholmen, stand on these early real estate acquisitons.

Building sub-centers provided Stockholm with a way to construct new housing without causing further congestion in the inner-city. Transportation problems and sprawl were contained by erecting these centers. Eltmer noted that the original plans called for physically and socially compact communities of 12,000 that were linked to Stockholm by a rapid transit system. They should not be viewed as English new towns or as American suburbs, warned the Swedish planner. More than fifty per cent of each center's work force commutes to a job in Stockholm or its environs.

The centers were planned so that residents could take advantage of the social, cultural and economic activities of the old city. Unlike an American suburb, these satellite communities offer shopping, recreation, housing and transportation facilities within walking distance of every resident. They also lack the one-class homogeneity of American suburbs.

Because of myriad national and municipal programs such as the housing allowance for low-income families, one finds a mixture of incomes, occupations, and classes existing together in these sub-centers. Cooperative and municipal enterprises build many of the apartments in Stockholm's satellites. Since about 95% of all current projects receive some form of government aid, developers must agree to government conditions concerning building standards and reasonable rents.

After this detailed presentation by Eltmer and his associates, Campbell Cyrus shepherded us back onto the buses for a drive to Farsta. As we headed south, we passed through an area full of yellow stucco homes with gardens that were built during Stockholm's suburban exodus of the 1920's. Soon we were in lake country.

I wandered around Farsta center for an hour. Single architectural pieces failed to dazzle me. Ole Elstrom, a Stockholm official who helped guide our tour, confided that Swedish architects should borrow more ideas from the Finns. Nevertheless, building designs were tasteful, and no structure looked shoddy.

Groups of buildings blend well. Sub-center architects must choose colors, designs, and building heights to achieve a total effect. It is this mosaic of social and physical planning involved in a Stockholm sub-center that stuns visitors. Below Farsta's shopping center is the metro. Residents can reach downtown Stockholm in twenty minutes. The center consists of suburban branches of department stores, some specialty shops, a bank, and a restaurant.

It took me three minutes to walk from Farsta's center to a park full of granite boulders and trees. Clustered about the park were apartments. Also within walking distance are recreation areas, acres of woods, and a lake.

The addition of small amenities gives these centers a soul. Boxes of flowers, statues, pools with fountains, benches, and artistically moulded pavements and street lamps make these centers places where people congregate. A group of boys devises a game, old people sit on benches watching the fountains, and couples amble about with their children and dogs. I browsed in Farsta's bookstore. Many books printed in English lay with the Swedish publications. Judging from the displays, the Swedes must enjoy sociology and current events.

Two recent immigrants to Sweden joined our group for lunch. We chatted with them about their views on their adopted land. One of them, a girl from Philadelphia, worked on a coronary team in a Stockholm hospital. From her position as a black American living abroad, she judged the Swedes to be enlightened on social issues. She admitted that the country's high taxes originally jolted her, but she praised the quality of public services. On the subject of student protests, she stated that Sweden's youth wished to eliminate the vestiges of class consciousness in their country. She noted that Swedes tended to treat their professional people like feudal lords.

After lunch, we motored to Skärholmen, a larger sub-center that will serve 300,000 people when completed. We drove by several parks offset by highrise apartments. In their rush to overcome their housing shortage, the Swedes threw up too many highrises, but they now build lower and smaller apartment complexes for families. Faced with

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housing a dense population in a small area, Stockholm's planners find it preferable to construct apartments surrounded by parks and recreational land than to build houses that will devour all the land.

I watched fellow tour members fan out across Skärholmen's center snapping pictures as they went. Several ladies eyed us with expressions of benevolent amusement. Many blond schoolboys scooted about on bicycles. Campbell Cyrus pointed out how all steps at the center were designed with ramps for prams and wheelchairs. Like Vällingby and Farsta, Skärholmen's center was designed for walkers. Cars are relegated to a parking area in the rear of the plaza.

I strolled about the center with David Finks, a Catholic priest involved in urban work in Washington, D.C., and Robert Macon, an architect from Rochester, New York. David would look at the flowers, fountains, children, dogs, and mothers and exclaim: "Fantastic." Macon compared his struggles to include a few social amenities in his low cost housing project in Rochester with the acceptance of social planning in Sweden.

As our bus headed toward Stockholm, Campbell Cyrus delivered another sermon on the gospel according to Sweden. Tour members questioned him about taxes, Sweden's suicide rate, and individual incentive in a welfare state. He disposed of the suicide issue by citing statistics to show that Sweden ranked below many countries in this category. He indicated that the U.S. would have a higher suicide rate if it kept more detailed information about causes of death. Cyrus contended that Sweden's growing economic productivity disproved the theory that high taxes and welfare programs stifle the incentive to work. He told us to tour Stockholm's stores and shops to view Sweden's speciality and luxury products. Cyrus stated that a society didn't have to choose between marketplace accounting and social accounting. Individual enterprise and social planning worked together in Sweden, concluded the American architect. Asked if any slums existed in Stockholm, Cyrus joked about his efforts to find some slums for Senator Abraham Ribicoff to examine. He took the Senator to the most dilapidated section in Stockholm, but Ribicoff called it "charming." The Senator demanded to see some *real* slums.

In the late afternoon, we visited Milles Garden, a museum that was once the estate of the sculpter Carl Milles. Located across the water from Stockholm, from it we had various views of the skyline as we walked from one level of terraces to another. A red sky, a wind that blew tree branches in all directions, and the huge statues, combined to produce a scene that only a painter like Turner could recreate.

Marcy spent the day sightseeing and shopping. She confirmed Cyrus's assertions about Stockholm's flourishing boutiques and shops. That evening we ate reindeer in a seventeenth century house that now functions as a restaurant.

Friday, October 10—the sun intensified the colors of the buildings and the water. Marcy and I raced about from bridge to bridge seeing everything we could in one morning. We lingered for a while in the garden of Stockholm's City Hall. This red brick tower bordering the lake looks like a Renaissance construction, but it was built in the 1920's. In its garden, children played while adults basked in the sun.

At noon we boarded the boat for the trip to Helsinki. Campbell Cyrus stood on the wharf watching our group tramp up the gangplank. I thanked Cyrus for his efforts, and I told him that I wanted to bring some students to Stockholm for him to proselytize. Cyrus hinted that he was contemplating a return to the United States. As a black architect with a decade of experience with Swedish planners, he could contribute a lot toward an American urban revival.

We spent the afternoon on deck. The Baltic was smooth, and the boat weaved its way through a series of small islands covered with rocks and firs. The timbered shorelines offered a display of orange and yellow leaves.

A forum held that evening to discuss urban planning in England and Sweden turned into a sensitivity session. After a week of constant movement and an evening of eating and drinking, tour members were tired, testy, and in no mood for a discussion. A number of people lashed out at Sweden. The landscape architect from Silver Springs, Maryland, and the planner from Bowie, Maryland, stated that after conducting interviews with students, they were prepared to conclude that youth hated Stockholm's sub-centers. Young people wanted the action of a big city. Other members lambasted Swedish and English planners for their failure to utilize participatory democracy. Another man conjectured that a movie like *I Am Curious (Yellow)* indicated that Sweden suffered from a serious social malaise. One member noted that all must not be well in Sweden's utopia, because he saw many drunks and gloomy people roaming the streets.

The discussion veered in another direction. Fortunately, Sweden and England were defended. The black members of the tour began to laud the programs of these countries. Arthur Symes, Director of the Architects' Renewal Committee of Harlem, praised the social and physical results of Sweden's centers. William Hawkins, Director of the Municipal Detroit Community Development Association, argued that slogans about participatory democracy sounded grand, but that England's and Sweden's results made such rhetoric seem absurd. Ed Goff, a planner from Watts, contrasted England's and Sweden's commitment to solving problems with America's indifference.

The meeting dragged on into the night. I lost my ability to concentrate on words. One of the final speakers did win my attention. J. K. Smith, a tall, jut-jawed planner from Denver, stood up to declare that everyone was supposed to learn something from their exposure to Europe's projects. Standing there like the Wyatt Earp of urban planning, Smith implied that people should keep their eyes open and their mouths shut. I agreed. We had miles to go before we analysed.

(First of Two Parts)

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The Arrowhead Hunt

A Story by Kenneth Rosen

She wouldn't believe I was sick so in the end I said to the nurse, "I can't do anything, I don't want to do anything."

Karl was watching.

"Well," she said, after a long, thoughtful pause, "the thing to do is to have Mr. Oberlin get in touch with your parents. Perhaps they will want to come and take you home."

"But that—" I was so furious I couldn't speak. I stared at her and shook my head. "That isn't what I said."

I ran out of the Infirmary and out of the Mess Hall, letting the screen door of the Mess Hall slam behind me. I was running down the path before the long line of cabins, half-way to my cabin, when Karl slammed through the Mess Hall door, stood on the front steps and called me.

"Willis!" His moccasins clattered on the steps. "Willis!" he called again. "Wait a minute."

I turned to watch him. From the far end of the meadow below us we could hear some cheering raised for the finish of a foot race.

KENNETH ROSEN lives in Falmouth, Maine, where he has spent the last four years writing, camping with his family, and running in road races—"from five to fifteen miles," he claims. "The Arrowhead Hunt" is his first story in the NAR.

"You come with me," Karl said.

Though he wore a jersey from the York Barbell Club, he was skinny. I followed him into his cabin.

"You like the way those bunks are made?"

"They're all right."

He had his kids fold their second blankets into big triangles they centered on their beds. It looked flashy. I'd never seen it before.

He took two shoe boxes out of his footlocker and showed me his arrowheads, spearheads, scrapers, bird-points, and celts. I'd never seen spearheads. He had a stone mortar and pestle, a soapstone for fire making with a rod and bow, some field garnets, some quartz crystals, and some square prisms.

"You said you liked arrowheads," he said.

"Yes."

"Do you want to be in this cabin?"

I looked at those fancy triangular blankets.

"Do you have a place?"

"Would you stop bothering everybody then?"

I thought of not having Peter Ryan bothering me and punching me.

"I would be happier."

"I'll take you arrowhead hunting this afternoon if you want. I'm going to go."

"It it all right? Do we have time?"

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"Go get dressed."

I ran over to my bunk. We had plenty of time. It was only about fifteen minutes after nap. I didn't know what he wanted me to wear, but I put on dungarees and sneakers. He was half-way across the field to the dock. I charged through the fringe of unmowed weeds. The opposite bank of the river was shocking green and as I ran I swore the Susquehanna was the bluest river in the world.

The campfire site was in a grotto a hundred and fifty feet deep and lined with log benches. They had to initiate new campers (blindfold them, march them around, and make them drink buffalo blood), have Indian dances, give awards, sing songs, and have more dances. I had to get initiated and I was an Indian Dancer. I didn't go to the games or stayed away from them as much as I could, so I didn't have anything to do with the awards. Singing songs was all right, "They Built The Ship Titanic," "He Rode Out of The West On A Tornadeo," and "Taps." I didn't know some of them.

You came into the woods in the dark, barefooted, wearing breechclouts made out of belts and towels, or if you'd been there the year before, chamois car polishing cloths, and blankets pulled around your shoulders. If you'd won some feathers, you wore them. Campers who'd been there a couple of years wore full bonnets. I'd get a feather for being an Indian Dancer. Indian Dancers were painted, face, arms, body, legs.

They started the fire by magic. The upper log benches were full of people in dresses and suits. There must have been a hundred of them. Some were even standing way along the ridge. They couldn't have been parents, because they looked rich and because I never got a chance to tell my parents to come. They blindfolded us and made us drink buffalo blood. It tasted like tomato juice with tabasco and vinegar.

That afternoon was hot. My skin felt clammy and I was unable to concentrate. The sky was clear, the sun was fierce and now made the rough masses of green on each side of the river look dusty. Invisible songbirds would suddenly scream and suddenly be still.

"I thought you knew how to paddle a canoe?" Karl called up to me. "Ship your paddle," he said. "Put it in the canoe and don't move."

Two rowboats were moored at the dock. Ten rowboats were lined across the river waiting for Rod Smith, my counselor, to fire the starter pistol he stood at the end of the dock aiming at the sky. Rod lowered his pistol as soon as he saw the canoe nose up to the float, and a muffle of angry shouts came across the water.

"What are you doing, Willis?" Rod called, ignoring Karl.

I kept still.

"We need a rowboat," Karl said. "This canoe leaks when it's going slow and Willis can't paddle."

Rod looked across the river at the ten boats. He raised his pistol and they quieted. He waited for them to hold their bows steady in their best line, shouted their mark and set, and then fired. The report echoed half a minute, and the rowboats slapped into motion. There was rustling in some bushes near the dock, flapping black birds rose off Goat's Island, and on our side of the river the campers watching the race began to cheer.

Rod trotted over to the float, caught the bow of our canoe, and leaping from the float to the beach, held the canoe off the gravel bottom. He wore his faded green shorts and his legs were covered with black hair.

Karl told me to get out, he'd hold the canoe steady, so I stepped into the water and soaked the legs of my dungarees. Karl climbed out, the canoe rose in the water, and I tipped it to get my sneakers and socks. My socks looked like dead frogs. By the time I carried my things to the bank, Karl and Rod had carried the canoe over and set it up on the rack. Rod looked me over when he returned.

"You're supposed to roll your pants up before you do that," he said.

"They'll dry okay," I said.

"What boats do you have?" Karl asked, nodding at the two bobbing in the row of empty moorings.

"Five and eleven," Rod said, turning to Karl. "Eleven's okay. Five's got a busted oarlock."

For a moment he stood next to us, picking at his teeth with his thumbnail and staring at the two rowboats. Then he grunted and sauntered back to his folding chair at the end of the dock. Karl took a pair of oars. I picked up my sneakers and socks and followed.

Karl rowed, I sat in the stern avoiding his silver sunglasses. He finally beached us near the old York Company Canal. Only last week Rod had hiked us here for a wiener roast. The place was dotted with campfire remains, even a spot of silver and gold from an occasional beer can. There was a boat nearby with an outboard motor cocked on its stern. I looked up and saw two elderly ladies sunbathing on the high rock jetty.

"Is this where you want to go?" I asked.

"You'd like a spot more romantic? You thought I'd take you to where the Indians left them heaped in a pile?"

He turned and I followed him up the bank. The ladies sat up and reached for their throats, tugged the little skirts of their bathing suits, and shaded their sunglasses with their hands.

"This is Willis Parker and I'm Karl Lopresti," Karl said. I nodded at them and they smiled. "We're from the summer camp up-river," Karl went on. "We're going to look for arrowheads."

Karl had an army foxhole shovel. He turned over a row of gravel, knelt, and picked over all the little stones he'd dug up. I dug into the gravel, but I kept thinking there was glass in the stones or a ripped beer can, and I could feel grit packing underneath my fingernails. I wanted to walk down a pebbly beach, staring at the pebbles. After a moment I sat back and watched Karl.

"My sister found an arrowhead," one of the ladies said. "She had a flat tire on Red Lion Road, and when she bent over to pick up one of her wheel-bolt nuts, she found a little gray arrowhead."

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The lady who spoke had put on a creaseless pair of khaki pants and a khaki shirt. She was sitting a few yards from Karl, examining the pebbles in front of her one at a time.

"Is that right?" Karl asked. "Isn't that amazing."

It sounded to me like a smart aleck thing to say. I thought she'd get touchy.

"That's right," she said. "Here, isn't this what you're looking for?"

Karl got up and walked over to her.

"It sure is," he said.

"Well you keep it. Maybe I'll find one for the other fellow."

Karl put the arrowhead in a watchpocket, and after thanking the lady, dug into another hole. I could barely see. I think I held, at one point, an arrowhead in my hand. There was no reasoning my desire to own an arrowhead, my desire to feel happy and foolish and a little embarrassed by finding one, picking up my luck, holding it in the palm of my hand, taking it back to camp where once in a while I would show it to some of the boys. They were pretty—the gold half-shell of a walnut or the clean skull of a small animal could sometimes remind me of the way I felt about arrowheads—but that wasn't it. It was made of hard stone by an Indian, dead, whose skull, if anywhere, was in a grin, uncomical and unwavering. An arrowhead was calm and totally serious.

"Willis, why didn't you say you couldn't row a boat or paddle a canoe?" Karl asked langorously as he rowed us back to camp.

"Why did you take me arrowhead hunting? All you did was make fun of me. I said I couldn't do anything, so leave me alone."

"Do you want to be in my cabin?"

The sun was low in the sky over his shoulder. My dungarees had stiffened. They were still damp and my legs were sore.

"Do you?" he asked again.

"I said I did."

"Don't think you're going to make trouble for me like you make for everybody else."

The dinner bell rang as we pulled up to the dock. I stood around while he moored the boat. When he hung the oars in the rack, he strode off toward the Mess Hall.

"I'll see you at Indian Dance," he said.

I started running. Way up the field I could see the last two or three campers climb the Mess Hall steps, go through the screen door, and let it slam after them, though I was too far away to hear it. I got to my cabin, changed into dry shorts, dry shoes, and a fresh jersey. I couldn't find any socks and one of my shoelaces was missing. Then the camp was silent except for my shoes kicking on the trail as I ran to the Mess Hall. In the dining room there was the hum of calm chatter, the orderly clinking of old silverware and heavy china. I was about ten minutes late, about eight minutes after they'd said grace, and Rod told me I couldn't eat.

"Okay," I said. "I'm not hungry."

Rod looked over at Karl Lopresti, surveying his own table to see that everyone had received a complete dinner, and then he looked back at me.

"Karl's been here about ten minutes. What happened to you, Willis?"

I didn't answer. This wasn't the first time I'd been late for dinner.

"Come to dinner on time and you'll never be hungry," Rod said, chewing his food. "I've already served and I'm not going to spoil my meal just to serve you whenever you feel like coming in for dinner."

"I said I wasn't hungry."

Rod looked at me for a moment and then resumed eating. New England boiled dinner, soft carrots, soft onions, soft potatoes, soft cabbage, and soft ham, all in a bowlful of salty water. The meal went by in a second. I didn't see anybody either eating or looking at me. Before he served the dessert, gingerbread and apple butter, Rod offered me the food remaining in the platter. I refused, so he waved the waiter away and doled out the gingerbread to everyone but me. Then he offered me some. Gingerbread seemed as appealing as alum. Finally, after the announcement about Indian Council, we were dismissed, table after table. I went to canteen and spent my dime on cheese crackers and peanut butter sandwiches. Then I went back to the cabin and lay down on my bunk.

Otis Meardon came in and sat down on the bunk across from me. I rolled over on my back and stared at the flat springs and mattress stripes. Otis was sitting on Peter Ryan's bunk. His own bunk was an upper. I took a deep breath. The army surplus blankets had a nice smell, like clean straw.

"Listen," he said. "I only spent half of my canteen. Want me to get you a bag of peanuts or something?"

"I'm okay," I said, but he'd already sprung out of Peter Ryan's bunk and was heading for the door.

I let him go. Then Rod came in. He had an eyebrow that went all the way along the ridge of his forehead. He had three brothers, two of them camp counselors and the other a senior camper, and they teased him about his eyebrow by wiggling their ears at him: when he tried to wiggle his ears the eyebrow would quiver at the bridge of his nose. For a while, admiring them, I used to try to wiggle my ears.

"Willis, do you intend to go on the scavenger hunt?"

"Do I have to?"

Rod stood at the door and gazed across the meadow.

"Nope," he said.

He turned and stared at me, gently rapping his head against the door frame.

"If you'd rather stay in bed tonight, you don't have to go."

My bunk mates drifted in, looking cautious and alert. Rod told them to wear long pants, long sleeve shirts, and sneakers or shoes. They dressed in silence, avoiding me as if afraid I might faint or go insane at any moment, and no one spoke at all until they were outside the cabin. Rod had them sit on the steps and around the front of the cabin while he went off to get their list for the scavenger hunt from Bill Mercer, supervisor of the Conestoga coun-

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selors, and Peter Ryan whispered through the screen, asking if he could borrow my flashlight. I didn't answer and soon they were gone.

In the silent dark of the cabin, I got out of my bunk, went outside, and then walked in the twilight down to the johnny cabin near the river. It was dark in the johnny cabin, and I sat there for a long time, not uncomfortable with the smells or the darkness, kicking my heels on the old floor. On the way back I was stopped by camp director Mr. Oberlin, out for an evening stroll. I said I wasn't feeling too well, didn't eat any dinner, and that Rod said I didn't have to go on the scavenger hunt. Mr. Oberlin was wearing light colored slacks and a white, open collared, short sleeve shirt, and he looked like the proprietor of a tea plantation. Growing outside the nearby shower cabin were young bamboo trees, one of Mr. Oberlin's projects.

I went back to the cabin, climbed into my bunk, and started reading comic books. Once again I attracted Mr. Oberlin. He suggested I turn off my flashlight and try to get some sleep. I agreed, but I didn't sleep. I lay in bed reviewing my present situation and its possibilities. I decided to quit eating. If possible, I would explain to anyone that asked that I didn't need to eat.

Finally they got back and started getting ready for bed. Otis asked Rod if we were going back to that creek five miles from camp and resume work on the rock dam we worked on last Tuesday. Rod reminded him tomorrow was the last day of Indian Games.

"Who won the scavenger hunt?" I asked.

Nobody answered me.

Rod was taking off his hunting boots and getting into his moccasins.

"You going to tell us a story tonight?" Peter Ryan asked.

"No story tonight," Rod said.

He looked around to check their progess. Otis was kneeling at the foot of his bunk looking over his comic books. I had borrowed two and knew he was checking them over before he accused anybody. Rod gave him a pluck on the back of his head with his middle finger.

"Otis, if you don't quit fooling around, you're going to stand by the flagpole all night."

Otis darted away from Rod's hand, making everybody laugh. He climbed into his bunk and lay facing the screen window. When the bugler blew taps, Peter Ryan was peeing in the johnny-pot outside the cabin. Rod snapped off the lights, and Peter scrambled to his bunk.

"Willis?" Otis was whispering to me. "Did you take my comic book?"

I didn't answer. Otis was afraid to whisper again.

"You hungry, Willis?" Peter Ryan's voice called hoarsely.

"You mind your own business, Ryan," I replied.

The screen door flew open and Rod seized me by the arm, pulled me from the bunk, and dragged me outside the cabin over to the flagpole. I was in bare feet. The grass was wet. The flagpole chain rapped against the pole as if intentionally. Rod had gone off to the Mess Hall, to

GREG KUZMA

KEATS

His mouth cannot decide
what medicine will thread him back
to Fanny's kiss;

he limps in Rome,
life fading in his handkerchief.

His handkerchief is full of Keats
like libraries now,
like minds of certain PHDs.

Who wrote on water
and lay down
to watch the weather stir
more hearts than his bare language.

Someone was buying cheese
and someone eating it
at a small cafe beneath
where he lies
rhyming with his death.

Just one or two more stanzas left.

The dogs who know the dying
chase his legs.

The dogs who sleep in England
feel
that Keats is dying in the Italy
of their dreams.

Before the regiments of words
grew orderly beneath his eye
that now run drunk with rumor.

No poem would make room
for his life another moment

so Keats died.

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the counselors' lounge they had in a room off the dining room. It was cold in my pajamas, but I was still shocked and rubbing my arm where he'd pinched it. Suddenly I heard Bill Mercer.

"What's your name?"

"Willis Parker."

"What are you doing here?"

"Rod made me."

He looked at me without saying anything.

"I told Peter Ryan to mind his own business and Rod made me come out here."

"You're not supposed to talk after lights out. Now get back to your bunk. If I hear from you again, you're going to spend the whole night holding this up."

I came back into the cabin and lay down on my bunk. I didn't get under the covers.

"Go to hell!" I cried in a loud voice.

We all listened to see if Mercer heard. The stillness of the camp at night was mixed with crickets, bull frogs, and low voices muffled. After a while I climbed under my blankets and went to sleep.

After the campfire I had to go to the shower cabin to wash off the paint. All the Indian Dancers were crowded in the bright lit room. Only four or five could take showers at a time. There were three spigots, one of them broken. The slatted floor cut into your feet unless you could stand where the slats were soaked soft and gray by the soap and water. The paint was hard to get off. We were all naked, shifting our feet off the uncomfortable slats, trying to stand close enough to the steam to stay warm. I didn't like people's bodies touching me.

I waited to be one of the last to use the shower. Karl Lopresti came in and used the shower next to me. He noticed me peeing.

"What's the matter with you, Willis? You don't pee where everybody has to stand. You pee like this."

Holding his penis he stepped over to where the slats were dry in a corner of the cabin and peed down on the floor. That was where we sometimes threw our towels. The smell was wretched and made me gag. I turned around and put my head under the shower, gritting my teeth so I wouldn't make a noise, but the smell followed me. Under the shower I had tears in my eyes. I could feel my face blushing. The smell kept hitting me in steady waves, stronger and more bitter than anything I'd ever known. I'd never thought of anyone as being evil before, and I was afraid.

"Go over there to pee," Karl said.

"Mm hm."

"I talked to Mercer about getting you out of Rod's cabin. You can switch Sunday."

I nodded at him, afraid to open my mouth, stepped out of the shower and grabbed my towel. My blanket was outside near the steps. I was too wet for him to notice my eyes.

"Hey, you didn't get all the paint off."

"It'll come off," I said, standing in the doorway to dry myself.

I noticed some canes of Mr. Oberlin's bamboo broken and trampled. Then I fled with my blanket through the wet grass and along the path to my cabin.

I had a headache Sunday morning. I hadn't eaten a meal for a day and a half, but I was good-natured and relaxed about it, willing to sip milk or eat a piece of bread and jelly if it looked like Rod was going to make a fuss. It was a private thing, I didn't want to eat, and I felt at ease about it all day Saturday. I went to Sunday service and it hurt my head when I tried to sing hymns. Time was very slow inside my head, while everything outside seemed very fast. When I told Rod, my voice seemed fast and sounded hollow.

"I got to go to the nurse," I said. "I got a headache."

By the time I got to the nurse I could barely see. Huge iridescences floated over every direction I looked, blotting things out.

"I have a headache," I said to the nurse. "I can't see."

It seemed terribly important that I said 'got a headache' to Rod and 'have a headache' to the nurse. I started to cry. The nurse seized me by the arm. I tried to speak, but my tongue wouldn't work. It jabbered and wouldn't work. At that instant, my vision cleared. I tried to tell the nurse, but I jabbered. She made me lie down on a dining room bench. I was crying and jabbering, and fell to the floor, and then went on trying to talk, amazed at my inability to make words. It became a kind of delight. Then I noticed my headache had gone away, and then slowly my ability to speak returned.

"I'm all better," I said to the nurse.

"Good," she said.

I left the Mess Hall, went down the stairs, and marched to my cabin. I threw some things in my laundry bag and slung it over my shoulder, resolved to run away. I wouldn't head toward the road, toward the river, or toward the Mess Hall. I'd head straight up into the woods behind the cabin. Up there were places we'd never gone for wiener roasts, scavenger hunts, or cedar expeditions. But fifteen yards from the cabin the walking was miserable, so I turned toward the road. When I turned I saw Rod standing in back of the cabin watching me.

"You better cut this out before you really get in trouble, Willis."

I stood in one spot looking at him.

"No," I said.

Rod didn't move, but it was no use. I didn't want to run away. My white laundry bag slid off my shoulder and I heard my flashlight bang on the ground. I picked up the bag and walked toward the cabin. I didn't want any more touble. I wanted an arrowhead. I wanted things to be serious and calm.

"Can I stay in your cabin?"

He didn't answer me. I realized he didn't know what I meant.

"I want to stay in your cabin," I said, and as soon as I said it, I felt good. "I'm hungry," I said. I was lying. "I'm hungry," I said again.

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GUILLEVIC

THE MAN CLOSING UP

This is no well-run household,
The man closing up.

Something sticky on every story,
As in a flower.

The laundry
Does only the wash.

He holds in his hand
Something threatening.

He hopes that some day
He will know what to do with it.

He can walk,
He can talk,
He can sleep.

It isn't easy.

He has to carry
What he went through.

And the journey was long
Within minutes.

He amuses himself with the walls and the doors
And this is an anger
Against walls and against doors.

He's not at ease either
In valleys,

When he sees he's alone
Or when the other comes.

He wants to lie down
Upon forests,

To make himself a pillow,
But out of what?

He does not eat
Dead autumn leaves.

That's only a craving.

He does not hide in the sand.
He does not tear off pieces of flesh
To see what it's like.

He calculates.
He has devised a number of methods
Of calculating.

He goes up and down
The whole length of his calculations.

Always he finds himself back
At the same point of the spiral.

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For the man closing up,
What is it
They call the earth?

What is it:
To be on earth?

What is it
To go with the sun?

And then again:
To bathe in the stream?

What is clear
Is the pain one has.

What is flat,
What goes up,

What is round,
And one must turn
To what's inside.

The straight line
That has no reason
To stop.

So much to be climbed,
If he opens his eyes,
If he closes his eyes.

Farther away than colors
And even the flash
That would solve everything.

Any number
Of climbs.

The sea, he has seen it black
Like morals.

You don't call on firemen
Against what you see,

Eyes closed,
Eyes open.

You don't call on people
To help you

Against the circle, the line
Or against the flowers
That come to show you
What's inside them.

Even bowling
He doesn't know

What may be disclosed
When he sees the ball

That is so round,
That turns and stops,

If truly it does stop,
This ball.

Hard it is
To see the fire
Without being the fire.

And this is true too
For the tree, the sea

That's really the sea,
Just as a toothache's
The toothache.

Fortunately, the glass of water—
That can be drunk.

A mouth, a sucking thing,
The man closing up.

What's outside
Has got to be swallowed.

But it would seem
He's there himself
In a bigger mouth

That's wearing him down.

Whereas the apple
Is at its best
All the time.

He tells himself it's been this way
A long time.

That he's probably got
Something to do with it.

He has destroyed too much
Or not enough.

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To each his monsters
To put away in a corner some day,
Swollen with death and ridiculous.

To each his monsters,
In the meantime.

The man closing up has cooked up
His little song against the monsters.

There is the time of the something sticky,
There is the time of the fire,
There is the time of the cold.

From one to the other he goes,
The man closing up.

Wanting to be no part of them,
Wanting at most to play along
With them, beside them.

Obliged nevertheless to go through them
To the very end of his strength.

Goodness, should any come his way,
Remains on account.

On horseback, on all fours,
On belly, on back,

In town, in country,
Over tunnel, into tunnel,

Under sun,
Under slog,

The same body, his two eyes,
The horizon to be got past,

And in himself always, standing up,
What can stand up.

The white bedsheets,
That's a long story.

For the whiteness belongs to them both
When he lies down.

He thinks that upon it
He earns his night,

His right to the true black
And to all the grays.

How can you expect
Him to be well,
The man closing up?

As long as he doesn't know
What the angle is saying,

As long as he doesn't know
What they want from him.

Always he thinks of himself
And sees himself at the center,
The man closing up.

Much like the man
Who, naked, would put on the skin of a stag
Still warm from the last chase.

And speaks like someone
Who'd have something to say
From the center.

It remains to be seen what to make of it,
Of what he says.

—Translated by Donald Justice

"*Pour l'homme qui se ferme*" ("The Man Closing Up"), from GAGNER, by Guillevic, copyright 1949 by Editions Gallimard; the Justice translation appears with the permission of Editions Gallimard.

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A STORY BY STEPHEN MINOT

Bruno in the Hall of Mirrors

Bruno was in his old familiar sleeping bag again. He realized this even before opening his eyes. He liked the feeling of the coarse wool against his hairy legs. *Sleeping bag?* What the hell had happened? It had been months since he had camped out. He played with the problem of where he might be, knowing that all would be explained as soon as he opened his eyes — a peek-a-boo game with reality.

But when he did look it was clear that reality, the bitch, had cheated. He was lying in a desert, a goddamned moonscape. From his retina to the horizon there was nothing but jagged hunks of rubble. Moon, earth, or dream, it was a ruination. And he had to urinate. He wondered if, under the circumstances, there was any reason why he shouldn't let go right there in his bag.

"Oh crap," he said aloud. The incantation broke the spell. The doors to reality swung open and he was lying in the middle of the floor of his apartment in New York with shafts of morning sun beaming down through the filthy windows.

Lying in the middle of the floor? Who in hell took all the furniture? He sat up abruptly and woke Sara, tugging at her hair. "Take a look at that," he said.

The two of them sat there: naked, massive Bruno with simian fur covering the breadth of his chest; and lean, long-boned Sara, small-breasted and tight-muscled as an adolescent. They were dazed and fascinated — like spectators at a fatal accident.

"That Enrico," he said at last.

"That dear bastard," she said — 'dear' because he was an old friend, jolly and fat; and 'bastard' because as a subtenant for three months he had stripped the place and used it as a sculpture studio. Broken pieces of abstract frescoes were all that remained, more fragmentary even than the rubble of Pompeii.

Bruno and Sara had made the initial discovery late the previous night. They had seen the ruination by matchlight because the electricity had been shut off. But they had been too exhausted to react fully then. They had slept numb like returning refugees.

As she leaned forward to scratch her leg, her shoulder brushed his. He was reminded that all was not loss. Sara was very much there beside him. It was a pattern they had begun when he was at Columbia and had continued when he cut out and went to Georgia. But for the past three months he had been in a county jail down there and she, necessarily, could not be with him. Now he had her back and had lost all his furniture. O.K., he thought, to hell with furniture.

She pulled a pack of crumpled cigarettes from the pocket of his pants, which she had used as a pillow, and lit one for him. As she was doing this, he rubbed the side of his leg against hers.

"All this dust," he said, "leaves me itchy."

A contributing editor to the NAR, *STEPHEN MINOT is presently putting the finishing touches to a second edition of his creative writing text,* THREE GENRES *(Prentice-Hall). This summer he takes his family to Europe to gather material for a new book,* THEY SAID "NO!", *dealing with American war-resisters living abroad.*

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"We've been living in itchy dust for three months," she said.

He took the cigarette from her and she did the rubbing.

"Next time," he said, "let's share a cell."

"Next time let's run."

They rocked back and forth together, talking softly. And by the time their cigarette was finished they were half out of the bag, rolling together in the rubble, laughing and coughing and raising a cloud of white dust like smoke, as if they had once again caught fire in the middle of that enormous ash-heap of a room.

Reclamation began there. Later they showered and dressed and shoveled and finally swept out the place, sprinkling the floor to keep the dust down. They borrowed a mattress from the old Latvian in the basement and lined up a friend of a friend who said he thought he could help them get some of the furniture back.

Not that any of it was worth worrying about. The bed, for example, was of no special value to them. The Latvian's faded mattress was just as good and it gave the old man a chance to "do a favor for a fellow Slav," Bruno's father being a Czech. And they preferred to sit on the floor rather than chairs. But she didn't like the way the room echoed without her Iranian prayer rug on the floor, and he missed his Coltrane records and his books — particularly the ones on medieval civilization and alchemy. They weren't the sort you could pick up in the corner drugstore.

They had taken turns going out for sandwiches, cigarettes, coffee, and to make phone calls — it was important not to miss whoever it was who was going to help them find their belongings. But there was no need for all that. He didn't show up until evening.

Bruno had lit the gas log and added a couple of candles for light and the two of them were on the mattress munching on a pre-barbecued chicken and sipping Punt e Mes when the door to the hall swung open. The figure was silhouetted against the glare of the hall light behind him.

"You the Bruno?" The accent was Spanish.

"I'm not the Christ-child," Bruno said mildly. "You're the one who has our things?"

"I'm Pesos." As he swung the door shut behind him they could see him by candlelight. He was a tall, thin Puerto Rican with Victorian sideburns. He wore a suede, hip-length jacket belted at the waist. "Pesos — that's like 'two bits' in Spanish." He grinned and a gold tooth glistened in the golden light. "No, I don' have your stuff. But I take you where you find it."

"Where's that?" Sara asked.

Pesos shoved his hands deep into his coat pockets and made an exaggerated long face. "Waal, you might say it's here and there. So to speak."

"Did he sell it or give it away?" Bruno said, biting into a drumstick.

"Like you might say, lent it away, man. Lent it away." He gestured broadly and Bruno pictured Enrico, round and cheerful, going up and down Grand Street, passing out books, chairs, pillows in the little kosher meat markets, in the Hebrew Men's Club, and to the Italian kids who swept into the district for stickball. His vision was a grand tableau of generosity and brotherhood . . . that dear bastard.

Pesos squatted down and accepted a chicken wing. He also tried the wine but made a face with the first sip and wouldn't take more.

"You mad at Enrico maybe?" he said, munching.

"I should bash his head in," Bruno said, but he kept tight rein on his tone. During those six months in Georgia — half of them in jail — hatred had sifted down on him like fallout. It had almost reached his marrow. He'd be damned if he was going to stir up more at this point.

"An artist," Pesos said, his mouth full of chicken, "is not like people. He has special needs. And, waal, he needed space here. So several of us help him make space."

"Thanks a lot," Sara said, taking a gulp from the wine bottle.

"But I make it up to you. I have a truck outside. We'll pick up the stuff."

On the way down the stairs Bruno felt lightheaded — partly the wine and partly dislocation. He kept thinking that New York would snap into focus, that places and people would become familiar again. The process was taking longer than he had expected. His dear friends had stolen more from him than just furniture. He climbed into the battered old truck and sat between Pesos and Sara. With the three of them lined up in the dark like that, he half expected some ham-handed, red-faced deputy to tell them to hand over their belts, wallets, and watches. There were, he decided, a lot of loose and frayed wires slatting about in his head.

Pesos drove with an easy abandon, the old stake-body truck shuddering at each shift in course. He talked about two new theaters which had opened off Broadway and some of the plays that were planned, but his words glanced off Bruno. He couldn't care less about all that. Theater was a bore. Somewhere, scattered about in the enormous city, were bits and pieces of himself. The search for them was important.

For a while they were blocked by a trailer truck trying to back into a warehouse, and Pesos took a hand-rolled reefer out of a little tin box. "Panama Red," he said, lighting it carefully. "For my frans." They passed it back and forth, inhaling deeply, watching the huge trailer being inched forward and back, being lined up for the penetration. Bruno grinned at the enormity of it. Here was Hollywood's idea of a daring symbolic detail. He himself took no symbol seriously — not even the candlelit icons of his father's Orthodox church. As far as he was concerned, the more gross the symbol the more comic it was. He closed his eyes and wished he were back in his non-symbolic sleeping bag with Sara.

The time machine slipped its clutch noiselessly and he found himself walking through dark canyons which might have been Cooper Village, the three of them holding hands, swinging arms, and Bruno delivering a little discourse on the rustic charm of villages like Cooper.

"A return to the simple virtues of the 18th Century,"

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he heard himself saying. "Sturdy wives drawing water from the town well; men-folk out toiling in Central Park; a bronzed and hardy people confronting unspoiled nature. Oh to be raised in Cooper Village."

Somehow they floated to an upper floor — stairs? an elevator? gossamer wings? — and were confronting a Danish couple who wore matching blackrimmed glasses. Pesos was saying something to them about a hot plate, a kitchen table, some dishes, pans, and books. Bruno watched them while the walls of the apartment billowed pleasingly like a backdrop painted on silk.

"Is it truly necessary to have them back?" the man asked.

"You Americans," the woman said, "have the love only for *things*."

Bruno had been paying attention with only half a lobe. He was much more concerned with a view into the next room. Potted palms and philodendrons and hanging vines basked in neon sunlight and across the white-tiled floor came an enormous, jet black cat with yellow eyes. There was something in her deliberate steps which reminded him of Sara walking barefooted in the early morning.

"I'll take my *things*," he said, speaking pleasantly but distinctly and hearing his voice from afar, "or I'll take your cat and hold her ransom."

"You'd better do what you're told," Sara said. "He's a cat-molester."

So they won that skirmish and piled the table and chairs and lamps into the back of the truck together with a clutter of Pesos' things already there — a moose's head, a stage flat depicting trees and a meadow in the distance, and a naked manikin. Bruno shook hands with the manikin, patted his or her bottom, and then slid into the cab beside Sara and they glided off into the dark again.

"Where was the cat?" Sara said. "I didn't see any cat."

"It was a beautiful cat," Bruno said.

"A tiger in the jungle," Pesos said.

"With big, golden eyes," Sara said.

And they were at a town house on Waverly Place where a fat doctor was entertaining a gray-blond woman who spoke only German. She was particularly reluctant to give up a carved wooden jewel case, a Czechoslovakian treasure (without contents) which Bruno's father had bought for his wife at the 1938 World's Fair. It was all the family had "from the old country," and Bruno was sure it had been made in a Brooklyn sweatshop. Over the years the damn thing had been metamorphosed into a holy ark. It had finally been given to Bruno by his dying mother, part gift and part curse. Bruno hated it but he didn't like the way the gray-blond Brunhilde held on to it, fingering the carvings acquisitively.

Pesos had a list and was reading items from it: two chairs, plastic curtains, a clothes hamper, an electric iron, a bird cage with two starlings in it, a mobile made with rusty nuts and bolts, a lobster kettle. . . . Pesos wandered through the doctor's apartment gathering these things while their host stood there, gargling Germanic oaths.

He was demanding something about proof of ownership and when the woman asked him in German what was going on he shouted back at her in German as if she were one of the conspirators. Finally he turned to Bruno.

"You have no right over these things." His face was red. "You come in here as a stranger. You're looting my home! You want me to call the police?"

Then, abruptly, he shrugged as if facing a hopeless injustice and said, "Take them." So without another word they did, and Bruno barely remembered the actual transporting. Somehow they were down on the street again and slithering through the city, the truck now elevated from the pavement like a silent hovercraft. Pesos began singing "Silent Night, Holy Night," and they all joined in.

The craft hove to and lingered there a moment in the dark, bobbing gently and swaying with the tide.

"We now have some of your things," Pesos said. "Am I right?"

"You are right," Bruno said. "You are so right."

"Waal, the rest is not so easy."

"What rest?"

"The living room stuff, man. The living room. It's all at one place. Like it's being used right now."

"Let's un-use it," Sara said.

"Not so easy."

Bruno, though still at sea, smelled fraud in the air. He told Pesos that, and Pesos was hurt at the lack of trust.

"My fran, I brought you some things. The rest I cannot get tonight. But I can show you where it is. Would you like that? I show you that it exists and then later — another day — we talk about how to get it. Agreed?"

Bruno and Sara agreed and the harbor lights turned green. Once more their ship slid out into the night.

Bruno clenched his right hand into a fist. It wasn't anger — he just wanted to see something solid for a change. He placed his other hand over the knot of flesh and bone, like a ball-and-socket joint. Holding his own fist like that in the dark was reassuring — like gripping an altar rail — or the horizontal bar in the county jail cell.

How extraordinary, he thought, that he had been in that Georgia jail on the morning of the previous day. Time was altogether too elastic. He could still hear the sound of breakfast forks and knives scraping against their metal food-trays, the bench-scraping and coughs and belchings of a hundred men forbidden speech, the squawks of the rubber squeegies as they swabbed down the concrete floors. He could feel the dead weight of boredom. He could smell the faintly sulfurous scrambled eggs, the rancid fats from the kitchen, the Lysol of the latrine, the beautiful pine-tree odor of the carpentry shop. All these were with him, vivid and immediately present: but the experience itself had slid back until it was almost vicarious — some *other* Bruno Zelek had quit college and joined the Freedom School in Georgia and had strayed from teaching to direct action and had ended up in jail on a crazy charge of insurrection; and now *he* was one of those moral voyeurs who could read the paper and pay tribute to the splendid work of that young idealist without taking

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as much as a single step toward danger *and it was an enormous relief.*

"I'm out," he said aloud. "Out." It was as if he had just that moment been sprung. He clapped his great fist against the flat of his palm.

"An' baby, you're *in,*" Pesos said. "Like you know that, don' you?"

"Out," Bruno said. "That's all I care about."

"He's *in,*" Pesos said to Sara. "Picture in the papers. Everyone knows his name."

"A lot of good that did," Sara said.

"Big rally too. Lots of speeches."

"Wish we'd been here. Instead of there."

"An' spoil everything?"

Bruno let their voices slip out of focus and watched the dark succession of doorways and loading platforms slide past them, noiseless as a waterfront on a moonless night. The air was fluid and his mind swirled gently in eddies.

It was marvelous how many tall-masted cranes stood next to half-dismantled buildings. It seemed to Bruno that they were stripping the city and perhaps preparing for a new show. The night was intermission time and in the morning he would wake and . . . . He stared at still another crane and another building in rubble and another couple locked together in the shadow of a rusting truck. *Another couple?* Hell, it was the *same* couple there. Pesos must have been circling. How many times had they been by the same scene? He turned questioningly to Pesos and saw him squinting at his watch. They were stopped again and Pesos' hands were at the top of the wheel and he was trying to read the time.

Odd, Bruno thought. Time had been so free-flowing all evening and Pesos so loose — why the change? They were passing under a streetlight now, and again Pesos studied his watch. His face was drawn, a different person altogether. Then they swung into a dead-end alley only wide enough for one car and stopped at a loading platform.

"Here," Pesos said. They all got out without asking any questions. They climbed up stairs to a warehouse door.

"You must keep quiet," Pesos said to them. "No questions no matter what."

One question would have been why Pesos had a key to this place, but that was only one of many. And none were allowed. Silently they entered — hallway long and dark, one sooty bulb at the end of a cord, plaster cracked to the lath, an unenclosed pay-phone with a black halo of names and numbers on the wall around it, floorboards squealing at every step. And from out of a doorway down at the end stepped a man in a cape and Pesos said, "Ho kay?" and the stranger, "Wait," and they waited.

"Crazy," Sara said. "This whole bit."

But what else could one add? They waited in silence. Bruno smelled plaster dust and sweat. Then he heard music. It was a chorus. Good God, it was "Onward Christian Soldiers"! He started to ask about this but was hushed. Then the other man was ready for them and Pesos told Sara to wait there for just a minute. Bruno was ushered down the hallway feeling vaguely sick and humming "Onward Christian Soldiers."

The stranger and Pesos led Bruno up a few steps, holding on to his arms as if he were a condemned prisoner taking the Last Walk. The music grew louder. They were passing some heavy draperies and Pesos whispered, "When we let go of your arm, turn right and keep walking. Go right in where the stuff is and make sure it's all there. Just check it over. But don't say a thing."

"Or," the other one said, "you'll never get your furniture back."

It was a line out of a kidnapping movie. He, Bruno, was supposed to answer, "*You wouldn't dare,*" his voice trembling. But his throat was dry and the words stuck as if he had stage-fright.

"Now!" Pesos said and they gave him a little shove. He turned right and stumbled into a lighted room. He kept walking as they had told him to and then stopped still. He was right back in his own living room. It was furnished now. Everything was there. . . .

His couch — the flush-door-and-foam-rubber type covered in black with a patch in gray — and the red sling chair and the cinder-block-and-board bookcases and even his own books and magazines scattered in his own disorderly order. And on the top of a stack of magazines was the Coltrane album which he remembered playing all night before taking the bus for Georgia. It had a torn cover. And on the floor, the Iranian prayer rug. The entire room was exactly as he had left it. Except for that insane music. And except for a bearded stranger sitting on his couch reading a copy of *Encounter.* He didn't even look up. He just sat there reading.

Bruno swayed, caught himself, and ran his hand through his hair. He squinted, trying to focus. Was he really obliged to say nothing? Then over the sound of the music there was the screech of a World War One whistling bomb coming down on them. He held his breath. Just before the explosion he turned around and looked out past a glare of lights and saw an entire theater of people watching him. He opened his mouth to say "A stage!" when the bomb hit thunderously and the curtain fell.

The explosion and music gave way to a storm of applause and cheering from behind the curtain.

He stood there dumbly, feeling like a Kodiak bear who has been tricked into performing at a shoddy circus. For a moment he considered ripping at the curtain. Behind it, the applause splattered like hail.

Then from the wings a variety of people materialized: a round hunk of a man in a black corduroy shirt, the Danish couple with black-rimmed glasses, a fat man resembling Enrico, two beautiful black girls, Pesos, the German doctor, and others. They all lined up with their arms across each other's shoulders. Bruno was half a head taller than any of them, but they managed to lock him into the center of the row. The curtain rose. The lights blasted him. The applause swelled and the line of which Bruno was now a part bowed low, bending him

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with it. He tried resisting, but it was as if the weight of the entire cast was on his shoulders and so he had no choice. When the curtain fell for the third time the line broke and the chunky man with the black shirt seized Bruno by both shoulders.

"Well done!" he said, giving Bruno a little shake. "Just what we had in mind." He turned to Pesos, smiling like a circus manager. "And for once, you didn't muff it. Good timing, Pesos."

There was a flurry of activity as everyone pressed to shake Bruno's hand. It was splendid, they told him. Couldn't have been better. His expression. That gesture of running his hand through his hair. Magnificent. That look of alarm. Was he *sure* he hadn't rehearsed it? Had he never been on the stage before?

Bruno stood there, slowly turning from one to the other. The blackshirted ringmaster was introducing him now, but there was no way of connecting the right bodies with the names. He kept nodding at the wrong face and the chorus would repeat "No, no, not that one," and laugh and turn him in the right direction as if he was about to pin the tail on a donkey.

The two solemn Danes from Cooper Village peered up at him, their eyeglasses flashing like headlights. "A striking *event*," they told him. Behind them was the German doctor. How did *he* fit in to all this? "Very natural," he said, clapping Bruno on the back. "Very unaffected. Did you never guess? Not even at the end?"

"Guess what?" Bruno asked, surprised that they hadn't taken his voice as well.

"Marvelous, marvelous," the thin, bearded one said, raising his arm and letting his hand drop down limp at the wrist like the head of a dead duck. "Oh you are *too* perfect."

A tall Negro in a white shirt opened the curtains again. Most of the audience had left the tiny theater, but a few lingered by the back row — a covey of teeny boppers, an old wino, a well-dressed couple. Some of those on the stage hopped down onto the floor and some of those by the exit wandered up to the stage. The interchange was confused, but most everyone seemed to know each other.

Bruno had difficulty focusing on the scene until he found himself looking right into the fat face of Enrico — Enrico the thief, Enrico the violator of friendships and trust. *That* much was clear.

"You sonofabitch," Bruno said. It was a relief to be angry. With pleasure he grabbed Enrico's shirtfront and lifted until his victim, red-faced now, was standing on the tips of his fat little toes. "Stole everything didn't you?"

"Oh, hey, Bruno, take it easy." He was having difficulty getting words out. "Peter, hey Peter, doll, tell him. Tell him about it before he kills me. Peter, hey Peter."

Peter turned out to be the blackshirt and he was highly indignant.

"What the hell is this?" he said. "You think you're an ape or something? Put him down." Bruno put him down mainly because he was getting heavy. "I knew you wouldn't do the minute I set eyes on you. Wrong type. You're more of a wrestler than a pacifist."

"I'm no pacifist," Bruno said.

"Don't tell *me* what you aren't. This is *my* play, man."

He turned to the others and told them that there would be a five-minute break but to stick around for rehearsal and no one was to leave or he'd break their necks.

Once again he reached up and placed his two sweaty hands on Bruno's shoulders. His round head was set directly on a square hunk of a body. His blue-stubbled face looked up at Bruno with the chin-jutting confidence of a Mussolini.

"The play is mine," he said, this time with more pride than anger. "*I* wrote it. *I'm* producing it. And *I'm* directing it. That way there's no argument." He grinned at the mere thought of interference.

"I came to get my furniture back," Bruno said.

"And the name of this play — in case you haven't been reading the papers — is *The Saint of Saigon*. He swung his smile on his listeners like a searchlight and they beamed back at him. "Actually Saigon is never mentioned in the play. The setting is Bruno's consciousness."

"Bruno?"

"Bruno." Peter gestured to the thin, bearded character who had been sitting on the couch reading *Encounter*. "We go by our role-names here, so he's Bruno day and night. Right, Bruno?"

"So right," the other Bruno said. "*Absolutely*." He turned to his namesake with a quiver of enthusiasm. "I even *dream* as Bruno."

"You can stay the hell out of *my* dreams," Sara said. She elbowed her way into the circle. "Come on," she said to Bruno, "let's get out of this freak house."

The crowd fell back as one might on discovering an uninvited guest.

"Who's the chick?" Peter asked.

"A friend of mine."

"Friend?"

"Friend."

"Friend like a bedmate?"

"Friend like it's none of your business."

"None of my business?" He paused for a moment, mouth open. "None of my business? It's *my* play. Didn't I just tell you? Like I'm running the show here. It's *my gig*. *My scene*. You dig?"

"I'm in if he's in," Sara said. "No one's going to lock me out again for a while."

"I'm not in," Bruno said.

"Of course you're in," Peter said. "You're Bruno, aren't you?" He plunged his stubby finger into Bruno's heart. "Look, man, I like your story. It's authentic. It's genuine. So I've gone to a lot of trouble getting this thing right. Enrico and me, we moved all your junk over here. We've spent hours poring over your journal and all those letters from your father — does he have rotten handwriting! — and I'm telling you I did a lot of revisions in the script. Like I wanted you to be more in the anti-war movement. I mean, that's the white scene

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right now. Tripping in the South ended in '63. You're out of phase. Like you're *nowhere* man. But I compromised. Me, Peter, compromised. I have you working *both* scenes. Peace and the race gig. For your story, I *compromised*. How's that for love?"

"Crap," Bruno said.

"Oh, *really*," the other Bruno said.

"Gratitude," Peter shouted, gesturing to everyone, "listen to that gratitude. For him we even held off the opening. We engineered a happening for the press. We sweated waiting for your arrival. And now we put our life's blood into rehearsals and open in two days and with what immortal words are we thanked by the man who claims sainthood? 'Crap.' Oh, such eloquence. Such nobility."

"Let them have it," Sara said. "Come on, love, let them have the junk and let's go."

"This is my room," Bruno, *né* Bruno, said. "I mean why the hell should I be thrown out of my own room?"

"*Well*," the other Bruno said, "we *are* being childish tonight, aren't we? I mean, *really*."

"Intermission's over," Peter shouted. "Back to rehearsal." And to Bruno and Sara, "Enough clowning for now." He gestured them toward the audience. "Places everyone."

Sara started to leave and Bruno caught her by the wrist and brought her back. He sat down on the couch, arms folded. Sara sat beside him tentatively. Peter bellowed at the scattering of audience that they were to shut up, to stay in their seats, to put out cigarettes.

"You're crazy," Sara whispered to Bruno.

"It's my show. That's what they say."

"Like hell it's your show."

"Stick around. Maybe they'll give you a part."

"Good God, you're beginning to enjoy it!"

She started to get up and he pulled her down again. Peter had turned and was lecturing the actors. The other Bruno had been joined by a chorus of three Negroes — one man and two women. They were wearing black robes of the sort worn by Orthodox priests.

". . . So it's late and you're tired," Peter was shouting. "Forget it. You're going to move right into this the final scene. Forget everything else. Forget the little happening. It was only for kicks. Forget the audience. Pay no attention to these two clowns up here. Don't just play the part — *be* the *person*. In two days — Bruno, what happens in two days?"

Bruno started to open his mouth when the other Bruno supplied the words. "We open," he said.

"*Wrong*." Peter said, his voice thundering. "In two days we *become*. A transformation, not a play. A metamorphosis. A transmutation. A goddamned holy mass right here in this theater. Have you got it? Do you believe it?"

The other Bruno nodded. The chorus members took their cues from him and nodded too. Then Peter moved back into the wings where he stood, still visible, with the script in his hands.

For a moment there was utter silence in the darkened little theater. Then the other Bruno spoke and with his words the final scene began.

"Get back," he said to the chorus. "Move back out of my life. You've no right to impinge so."

"We've come to stay," one of the girls said, her voice ringing with theatrical sincerity. "Wherever you wander, we'll be just behind you. In classes, in your father's apartment, in bed — always we'll be in your range of vision."

"But why me?"

"Because you've been chosen."

"But I can withdraw, can't I? I have rights, don't I?"

What interested Bruno was the way his namesake's voice and gestures were all exaggerated. It fascinated him. He wondered how he would do as an actor, and to find out he began miming each line. He did his best to use all his facial muscles and to employ gestures.

He was, he thought, doing quite well for an amateur, when someone in the audience began shouting — something about getting that bastard out of there. Bruno was not sure whom they meant.

"You must submit to your destiny," the chorus was chanting.

"But I wish to lead my own life."

"You have no life. Submit, submit. You must submit. . . ."

He noticed that under their robes the members of the chorus were barefooted — not at all like the priests of his childhood. The one who was speaking with the other Bruno was now directly in front of the couch but facing the audience. She had, Bruno thought, lovely feet and a long, graceful neck; and he was suddenly sure that except for the robe she was nude. It was, after all, hot under the lights.

"Let's go," Sara hissed.

On impulse, Bruno flipped up the back of the girl's robe. "Hey!" Sara shouted, and the girl spun and kicked him, her bare foot surprisingly painful, and the other Bruno was saying, "Oh, *really* now," and they were in a four-way fight, punching, pulling hair, and shouting. Then Bruno saw Sara leap from the stage and storm down the aisle toward the exit.

Once again he made the choice. He sprang free of the stage and ran down the aisle after her. When he got to the door, he knew that he would be able to catch her. She wouldn't run hard once she was outside. So he turned to catch one last glimpse of the play. They had resumed. The other Bruno was standing on the couch now while the chorus turned about him, chanting, and the wail of amplified saxophones filled the theater.

The strain of the evening finally hit Bruno and he felt the chicken and Punt e Mes come up with a resounding, hot rush. He barely had time to straighten up and wipe his mouth when the Danish woman with the glasses jumped from her seat and began shoving him back out of the door.

"In the last act!" she hissed. "You Americans have no pride. It's people like you," she added with a final thrust, "who ruin everything."

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Getting to Lord Jesus Is a Powerfully Important Thing

A Story by John D. Keefauver

He knew what He was doing, Lord Jesus did, else why would He have him, a little colored kid, in this mix-up of getting drug into all that bay water to get baptized? Sure enough, Lord Jesus was sitting right up there in the sky watching it all. Why, Reverend Thomas had said it.

Still, it was a funny-feeling thing coming up to the beach where the white people go, being all mashed in with a bus load of the reverend's congregation, all dressed up in white robes and sheets. He had sat next to his mother on the trip from the church. She was like a warm, black pillow, shaking with the bus as it came over Howell's Lane out to the cement road. Pressed up close to her when he thought of what was going to happen at the beach, and pushed his dark hands into her jiggling fat until she pulled him close and whispered, "Now, Ronnie, child, that's all right, now baby child, don't worry."

But it wasn't all right when the bus stopped at the beach and everybody got out, all of a sudden real quiet at the sight of a crowd of white people on the sand, nobody laughing and singing "Jesus, I'm Coming" anymore. The white people twisted their heads around and stared at the buses. Some pointed, and Ronnie saw some smile. It was sure a funny-feeling thing. He dragged back on his mother's hand, but she said again, "Now, Ronnie, child, it's all right." Reverend Thomas was out on the sand in front of them, stern-looking, saying, "Be quiet, brothers and sisters, be quiet," even though everybody was already quiet. The buses were lined up along the road behind, like a wall, like protection, something they all could run into if they had to, to be safe.

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Ronnie wanted to hide. If he could just go right inside his mother and lie there with her all around him. He oughten to be here like this. He was a kid and he ought to be out in the lake swimming with Carl, like you're supposed to do in a lake, not wade out in it with all this white stuff on to get your head dunked.

But it was the only way to get to Lord Jesus, Reverend Thomas had said. He always said that. And now Ronnie was going to have it done to him. He was going to get to Lord Jesus. And Carl was going to see him. That was the worst part — Carl was going to see him.

Just the other day he and Carl were swimming in the lake, just up a little ways from where he was now. That's when he had told Carl what was going to happen to him come this Sunday.

Carl had mostly reddish hair, and freckles, and was the only white kid that Ronnie actually played with. He knew other white guys, but Carl was his only real white friend. Ronnie had played with him as long as he could remember, ever since Ronnie's mother used to go to Carl's house and do the washing and cleaning. They still played together. But they had to kind of sneak out and do it now. Because they were older. That's the only reason they could see. When a colored kid and a white kid got older, they just couldn't play together anymore. It was funny.

"You're going to get *what* in the lake?" Carl had said, stopping his splashing around all of a sudden.

"Baptized." Ronnie tried to say it simple, but it sounded funny. He guessed it was because he had been thinking and thinking the word so much that it must have changed the sound of it.

"In the lake?" Carl acted like he didn't believe it.

"Uh huh."

"Baptized." He said the word as if that was the craziest thing he had ever heard of. "You're supposed to swim in the lake, or fish or go sailing, not get baptized in it."

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"How do you get baptized in a lake?" Carl had wanted to know.

Ronnie just kept looking down at the water.

"Reverend Thomas, he pushes your head under."

"What for?" He wasn't slapping the water anymore.

"It's holy. If you don't do it, Lord Jesus will get mad at you."

Carl skipped his hand over a little wave, but not very hard. "We get baptized with just a little water from a saucer," he said. "The minister sprinkles some of it on your head."

Ronnie couldn't think of a thing to say then. He wished he hadn't even told Carl about it.

"Maybe it will be fun," Carl said after a minute, seeing how Ronnie looked so sad. "Just like going swimming maybe."

"I'd rather go swimming."

"So would I."

"It's on Sunday, too," Ronnie said. "All the people will be watching."

"Where's it going to be?"

"Right down there." Ronnie nodded toward Moon Beach, which was just about a half mile or so down the edge of the lake from where they were then.

Carl looked at Ronnie like Ronnie was crazy. Ronnie knew what the matter was. Colored people just didn't go to Moon Beach. Not that there was any law against it, but it just wasn't done.

"That's something I got to see," Carl finally had said.

So there it was. He, Ronnie, a colored kid, was going to have to go with his people to a white man's beach and get baptized in a lake that was for swimming, while the white folks — and Carl — watched.

Getting to Lord Jesus must be a powerful important thing.

Judging by the way Reverend Thomas was acting, it was. He had his congregation backed up against the buses and was walking back and forth in front of them, all stern-looking. Sweat was beginning to bubble out on his face. He was a heavy man, with short gray hair, and his stomach pushed out a little bit against his white robe. "Brothers and sisters," he finally said, "follow me."

He left the buses and started down toward the beach, with his congregation shuffling behind him, with Ronnie and the other kids hanging to their mothers' hands, with the white people gawking and coming closer. They walked down a boardwalk to the water. It was like the aisle in their church, Ronnie thought, only the people on either side were white, not black.

He wanted to hide his eyes against his mother's warm black side, and not look at the white people, all gazing and some smiling and some just looking curious. Crowds of white people were coming from both ends of the beach, Reverend Thomas was beginning to sing a song about Lord Jesus, love Lord Jesus, the congregation singing back to him. Mothers and fathers telling the children to sing, children scared stiff. Shuffling and singing and getting closer to the water, the whites crowding in, the reverend singing. It was more than a funny-feeling thing now; it was sort of terrible. Every once in a while one of the congregation would giggle, usually a woman, or a man would laugh, and Reverend Thomas would say, "Quiet, brother," or "Quiet, sister," and they'd be quiet.

Carl. Ronnie wanted to look to see if Carl was there, but he was afraid to. Everybody staring at him and — and it was mixed up — and — and he didn't want to get baptized in the lake, no!

But Lord Jesus was watching. He was up in the sky, He was in heaven, and you had to do it to get to Him.

Reverend Thomas stopped at the edge of the water, turned to his flock, then marched up and down along the edge of the lake in front of them, leading the singing with waves of his arms. Singing words swelled up, and Lord Jesus could hear, Ronnie was sure. He better had hear, anyway, because if He wasn't hearing all this singing, how would He know what was going on? And if He didn't know what was going on, all this baptizing stuff would be a waste of time. Ronnie was sure, though, that Reverend Thomas had a way of letting Lord Jesus know when it was time for his congregation to get to Him.

Waving his arms around, walking up and down, the reverend preached about sin and living right and loving Lord Jesus. "Yeah, yeah!" all his people answered, yeahing themselves right in close to Reverend Thomas and the Lord, saying it all was so, smiling as they said it. But the smiling didn't act on Ronnie. He'd still rather be out in the water swimming with Carl, away from all this getting-to-Jesus business.

"That man!" the reverend was shouting, "that man who lives with another man's wife! that man will never get to Lord Jesus!"

"Yeah!"

"Never make it into His loving arms!"

"Yeah!"

"Never will!"

"Yeah, yeah!"

Sweat rolled down the reverend's face. Ronnie could see it glistening bright on his bumpy cheeks. His feet were wet where he'd stepped into the water, and his arms were jerking like that scarecrow's Ronnie had seen one windy day when he was playing with Carl in the field behind the new school.

Most of the time the reverend was smiling now, and as Ronnie looked around he saw that almost all his flock was smiling, too. And so were the white people. Everybody was smiling, like the whole thing was one big comedy show. But Ronnie didn't see anything funny about it — getting baptized in swimming water.

He looked for Carl and found him at the water's edge. He, the white boy, was staring right at him, Ronnie, but he wasn't laughing like everybody else. He looked funny. He looked like he didn't know what was going on, or why it was happening. And he looked kind of sad too — like he was sorry it was happening to Ronnie. It made Ronnie feel even worse, it made him want to run away all the more.

But his mother had him by the arm — he looked up into her face and she was smiling too — and she turned

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him toward the water as the reverend started into the bay, clothes and all, his helpers behind him, pushing their robes under the water so they couldn't float on top. Two stopped beside each other every few feet, so that they formed a chain from the beach to Reverend Thomas. They were to pass the people along who were going to get baptized, passing them on to the next two helpers. They were sure making certain that everybody would get to Lord Jesus, Ronnie was thinking as the first one, a man, started out into the water. Helped along, he went wading right on out to the reverend and the reverend took his head and dunked it under the water, saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost." The sputtering man was helped back to the beach then and another one, a woman, went out and got the same thing done to her.

Then a whole bunch of people were going out, one by one, and getting their heads pushed under the bay. Some were laughing, some scared and some just looked blank, but they all kept moving forward until the reverend put them under. Ronnie shivered in his mother's grip, whimpering out an "I don't wanna," but she shushed him and marched him closer to the water with the line of people edging toward the bay. He dug his feet in the sand but she picked him up and flipped him forward, saying, "You gotta be a man, Ronnie, it's time."

When it was his turn, he felt his mother's hands leave him and the grips of two white-robed men take their place. They took him by the arms, they took him from his mother. "Come on, Ronnie, boy, come on, it won't be bad," they said, and passed him on to the next two men. He felt the water getting deeper, felt the black hands on his dark arms, felt their tug, their strength; heard hot in his ears the Negroes chant, "Lord Jesus, Lord Jesus, Jesus Lord-d-d," spilling into him as they passed him on, as if they were angels and he was going to heaven. Dark hands taking him, dark hands passing him on, dark hands taking care of him, showing him the way. He relaxed. He was in a dark-skinned land, he felt it all around him. From dark helper to dark helper he went, leaving his mother far behind, going toward the reverend and Lord Jesus, going away from the white people, the whites going, gone. He relaxed. He didn't think of Carl now, or his words; he was in a dark-skinned lake now, a lake for baptizing, a Lord Jesus lake. And he let it take him.

He let the baptizing take him, he was inside it now. And he let himself go.

The water was up around his chest and Reverend Thomas was waiting for him, black arms outstretched, saying, "Welcome, son, welcome, boy," water and sweat mixed on his smiling face, smiling like a black Lord Jesus. Then Ronnie felt the dark Jesus hands strongly on his shoulders, felt one black arm go behind his head to hold him, to protect him. Just the three of them now, he and the reverend and a black Lord Jesus.

And his head went under as he heard Reverend Thomas chant, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Ghost," and he knew that he was finally getting to Lord Jesus. It certainly was a relief.

THE FABULIST

VICTOR CONTOSKI

THE BARNYARD ANIMALS WHO SOUGHT THEIR FORTUNE

Once a jackass overheard his master say that the poor beast was no longer good for anything but an occasional *hee haw* and that he planned to sell the animal to a soap factory.

The jackass thought to himself that anything was better than the soap factory, so he left the farm and went over the hill to seek his fortune. Surely, he thought, there must be some place in the world for a poor beast who comes up with an occasional *hee haw*.

He stopped at another farm along the road, where a rooster who was good for an occasional *cock-a-doodle doo* joined him, and they sought their fortunes together. Soon the pair was joined by other barnyard animals: a pig, a cow, and a chicken—each of whom was good for nothing more than making an occasional sound.

Thereupon the animals held a conference to decide where they should go to make their fortunes. "It must be some place," they said, "where we will do little work, where our masters will look after us, and where we can let out an occasional *grunt, hee haw, oink, moo, cluck,* or *cock-a-doodle doo.* Does such a place exist?"

"Of course," said a passing bank president, "and I will help you get there." Whereupon he enlisted the support of the mass media and the barnyard animals were duly elected to the legislature, where they sit to this very day, making an occasional *grunt, hee haw, oink, moo, cluck,* or *cock-a-doodle doo.*

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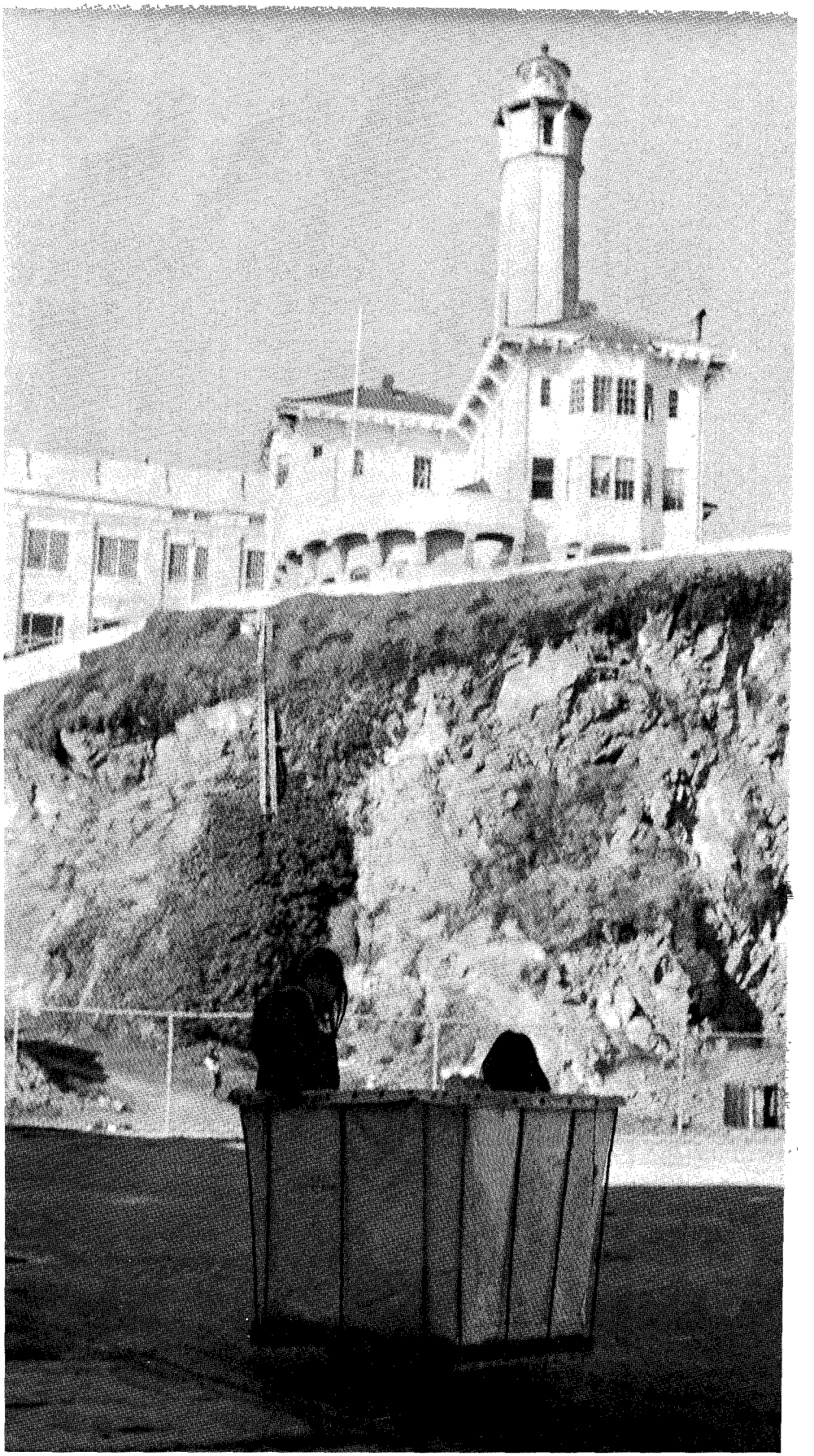
Photographs
and Text by
Richard Brook

The first 14 Indians to land on Alcatraz—early in November—were escorted back to the mainland by the U.S. Coast Guard. Less than two weeks later, a party of 80 Indians successfully carried out the occupation of The Rock, and by the end of December two-hundred adults and children from various tribes had settled down in the scarcely-hospitable remains of the defunct penitentiary. The government had left the island to a caretaker in 1963; the Indians wanted to be on The Rock when 1970 came around, to establish for the record that after seven years the Indians now had legal claim to the property.

Waiting for the White Man's Department of the Interior—or its subsidiary Bureau of Indian Affairs—to respond to the insular sit-on, the occupiers began to order their new home. Some sent for wives and children; nursery and grade schools were opened; "Radio Free Alcatraz" talked to the mainland at night. An Indian Council, made up from among the first 80 invaders, deliberated: on the eventual founding of an Indian University of Alcatraz, on spending money quietly offered to their cause, on asking more money from tribes across the country.

By late December (when these photographs were taken) matters were settled enough to permit some of the occupation force to visit their mainland homes for the holidays. Those who stayed on to maintain their claim found time to relax, like these Indian children (at right) careering in a laundry cart.



WHAT TRIBE? WHOSE ISLAND?

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On a San Francisco pier, Richard Oakes (above, far left), leader of an earlier confrontation at San Francisco State as well as a leader of the Alcatraz occupation, confers with two Black Guards and a boy from the local Black Panthers. The Guards came offering "movies and medicine," and traveled by tug to the dock at Alcatraz (below) on one of the hourly shuttles.

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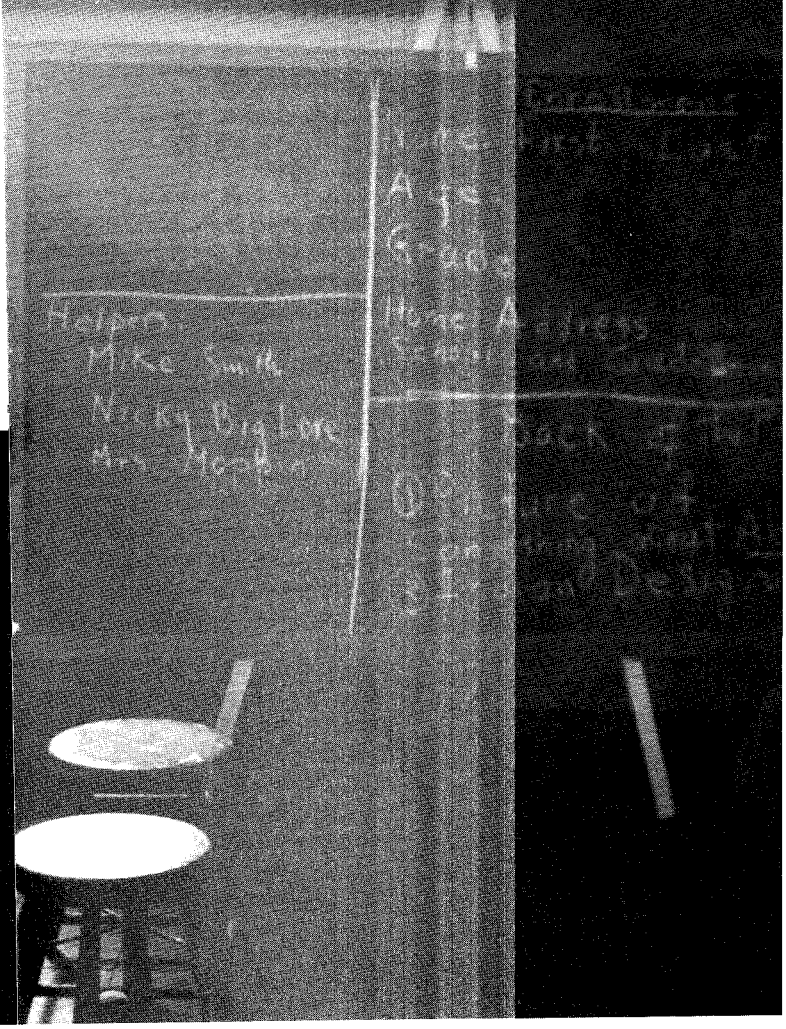
Big Rock School was out, but the blackboard (right) saved the children's assignment in the vacant classroom.

The small boy (below) had come in from the bright sunlight looking for his dog; unaccustomed to the dimness of the apartment hallway he failed to see his pal, who wandered out behind him. The two joined forces outside.



The view from the tug as it approaches the island (below) is transformed only by the change of a few letters on a government signboard. Eager visitors who try to come by small boat to the island often run onto the rocks before they can land; Indians are then reluctantly forced into rescue operations.

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John Trudell—who appears on the front cover—runs Radio Free Alcatraz (top, right) at night over the Berkeley FM station. He interviews spokesmen for the cause, arranges dialogues about Indian culture, and plays recordings of typical Indian music. At mid-day (below) he stops to visit his wife and waking daughter. His quarters provide an enviable view of the harbor, the Golden Gate Bridge, and Telegraph Hill.

(At right, bottom) Bell-bottoms and Levi's are represented on both sides as some of the young men take an afternoon break for basketball.

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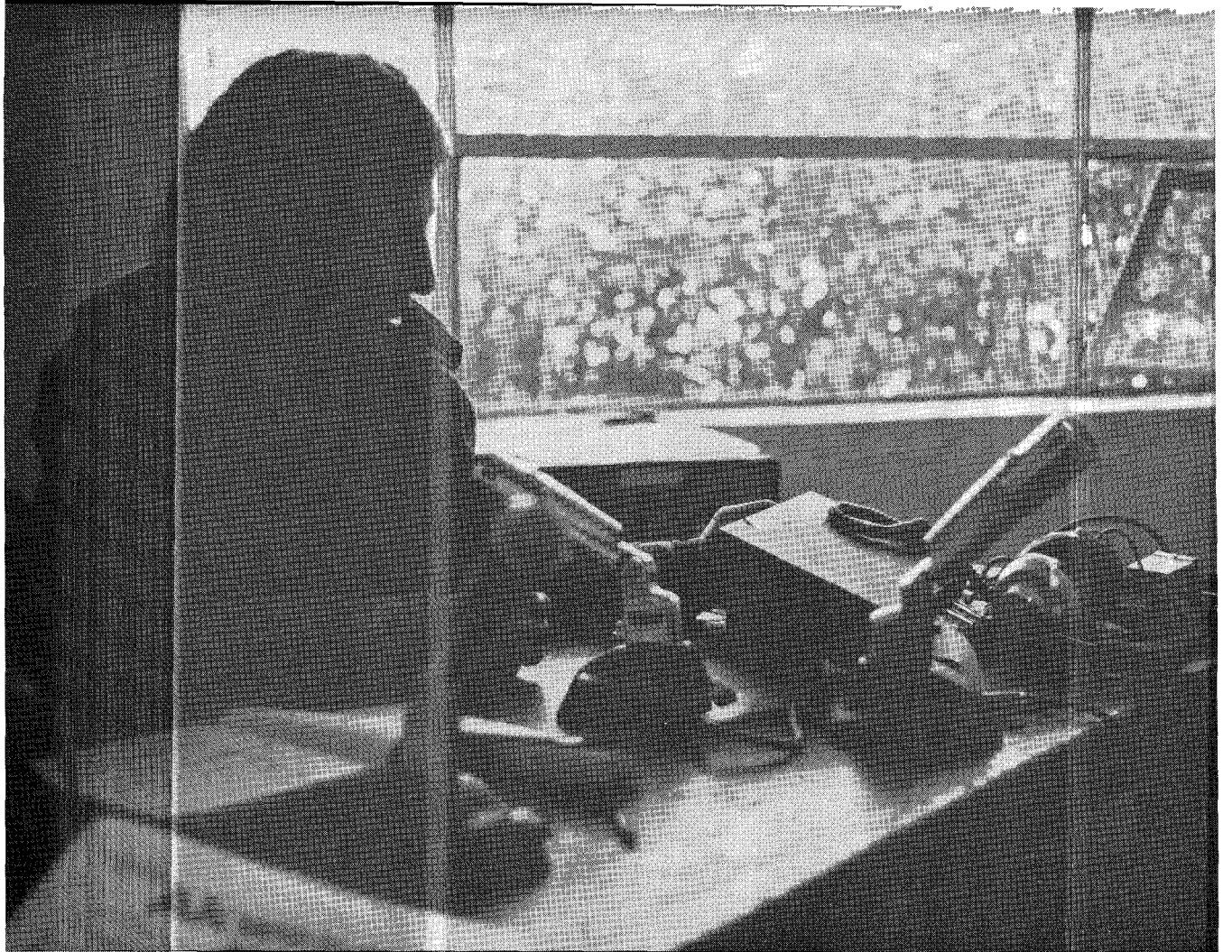

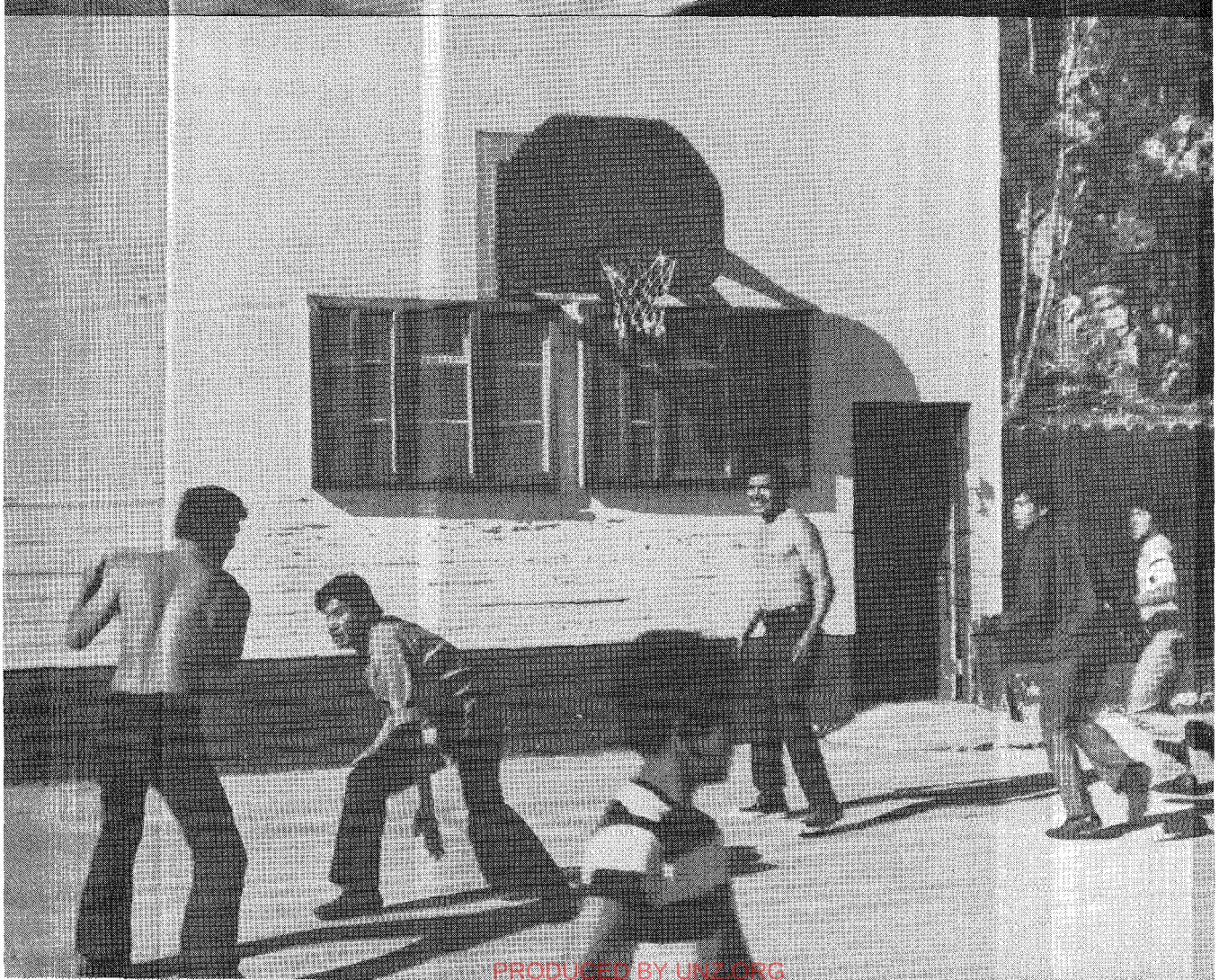

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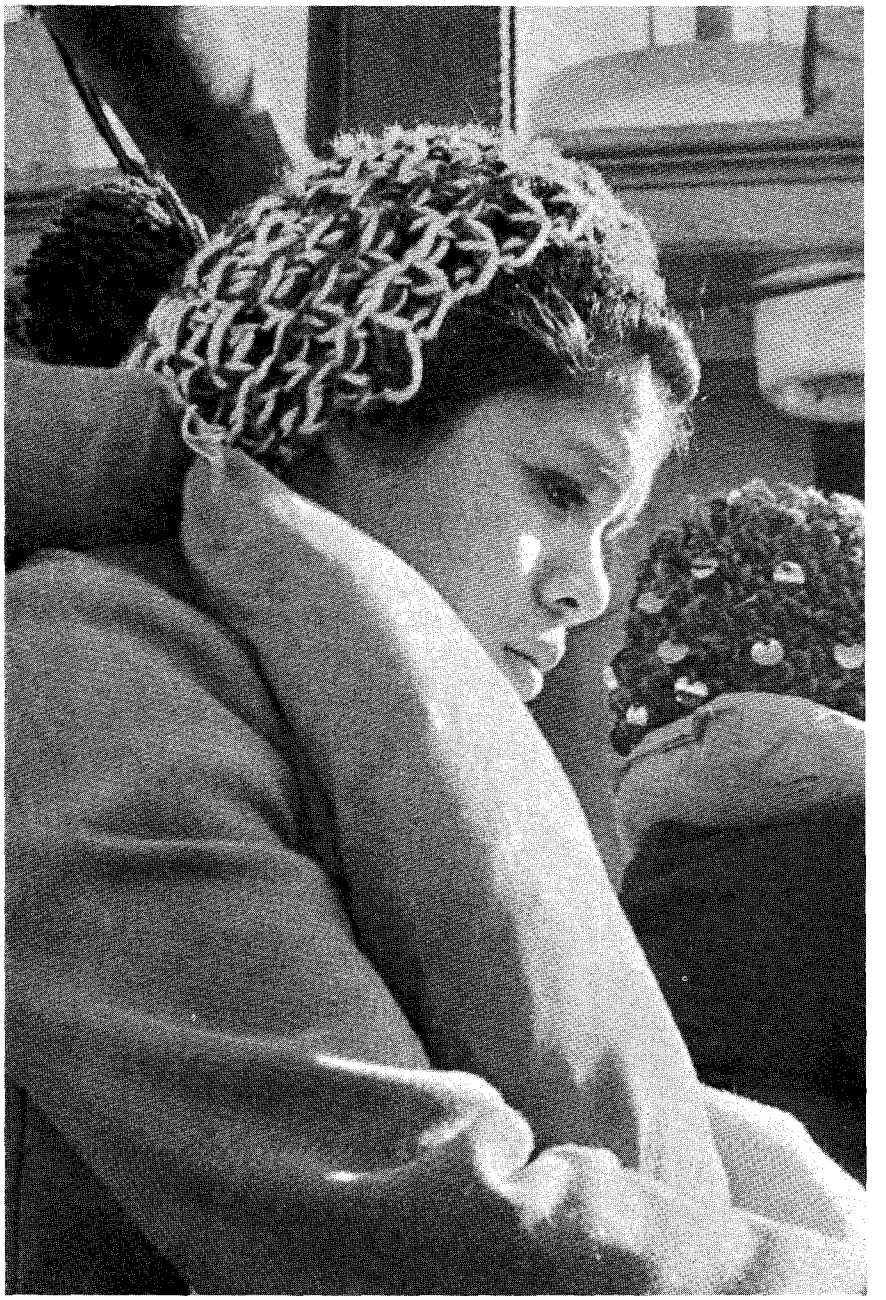

As the tug returns to the San Francisco pier, exchanging members of the occupation force, each traveler—alone— daydreams in the rumble of the tug and the gentle swell of the Bay.

On The Rock itself, the visitor feels the quiet intensity, patience, and sometimes surprisingly militant spirit of the cause—characterized by an Indian response to the Black Guards' offer of help. The Indian shook his finger at the Black in the long leather coat and said: "You better know, man, this is no Civil Rights cause we got here."

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JOHN GULICK

MORNING FOG ON LAKE SUPERIOR

Drifting clotted fog
hides the town. The lake
has sent its spirit
here where the lake can't
reach. This thick raw wet
holds the temper of that
great wash out there,
invisible now,
but lapping over
the horizon.

Seagulls weathered in
sit on every post
and pole motionless
patient, unblinking,
disappearing and
appearing as fog
wraps and unwraps them,
figures carved on tops
of totem poles to
appease the god of
waters, waiting for
the god to speak.

The fog's only voice
is its one motion,
moving whisper of
invisible cars
on the highway over
there, gradually
spinning shaggy cords
of sound, ravelling
and unravelling
with distance to mark
the road's steep ascent
of the cliff to heights
far over the lake
where the sun waits.

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A classmate of the late Flannery O'Connor in the University of Iowa Writers' Workshop of the 'Forties, Jean Wylder recalls the impression made by Miss O'Connor on friends, teachers, and critics, and includes excerpts from a correspondence that continued off and on until shortly before the Georgia author's early death. Mrs. Wylder is presently associated with the International Writing Program at Iowa.

Jean Wylder

FLANNERY O'CONNOR: A Reminiscence and Some Letters

My first impression of Flannery O'Connor was that she looked too young and too shy to be a writer. We were graduate students at the University of Iowa and members of Paul Engle's Writers Workshop during the fall and spring semesters of 1947 and 1948. On the opening day of class, Flannery was sitting alone in the front row, over against the wall. She was wearing what I was soon to think of as her "uniform" for that year: plain gray skirt and neatly-ironed silkish blouse, nylon stockings and penny brown loafers. Her only makeup was a trace of lipstick. Elizabeth Hardwick once described her as "like some quiet, puritanical convent girl from the harsh provinces of Canada;" there *was* something of the convent about Flannery that day — a certain intentness in the slight girlish figure which set her apart from the rest of us. She seemed out of place in that room composed mostly of veterans returned from World War II. Flannery was only 22 years old then, but she could easily have passed for 17 or 18.

I don't believe she was to change very much in the next seventeen years before her death. In the later photographs, showing her on the aluminum crutches that became a permanent part of her life, there remains that same schoolgirl freshness, a young gentleness in her face and expression. Only in the unsmiling eyes of the stern self-portrait is there evidence of the Flannery who wrote blood-curdling fiction.

It was her isolation from the other "writers" in the class that first drew me to her, and soon that semester I moved to the empty seat beside her. We and one other girl were the only women in the Workshop that year. Most of the others, the former GI's, were tuned-in to New Criticism theories, and many sensitive young writers got shot down by the heavy onslaught of their critical fire. Stories were dissected like so many literary specimens; few stood up under the minute probing. Many years later when Flannery was speaking to a writing class at Hollins College in Virginia, I'm sure she was remembering those Workshop sessions at Iowa when she said, "Every time a story of mine appears in a freshman anthology, I have a vision of it, with its little organs laid open, like a frog in a bottle."

Sometime late in that first semester I learned that Flannery had received the MFA degree the year before and that she had already published one story. "The Geranium," the title story in her MFA thesis, had appeared in *Accent* in the summer of 1946. And "The Train," also from the thesis, was scheduled to come out in *Sewanee Review* the next spring. Flannery was staying on at Iowa for another year because Paul Engle had gotten her a grant of money to live on while she worked on her first novel. The one person I had thought to look least like a writer on the opening day of Workshop had turned out to be the most promising writer there! From then on, I may have looked forward more to sitting beside Flannery than to the Workshop itself which, in those days, was something like going to a good movie. Writers read their own stories, sitting at the front of the room.

Flannery never entered into the Workshop discussions. I heard that when she was first in the Workshop in 1945, before she had published anything, her stories had not been well received and she had not tried to defend them. The only comment I ever heard her make in class was the next spring. Andrew Lytle was in charge that semester during Paul Engle's absence from campus, and he asked her what she thought of the story we were discussing that day. By then, most of the students knew she was already a published writer; everyone in the room wanted to hear what she would say. In a perfectly dead-pan voice, addressing herself to the general emptiness of the front of the room, came her laconic reply: "I'd say the description of that crocodile in there was real good." The irony of Flannery's statement lay in the fact that the crocodile *was* the best thing in the story but it had absolutely no meaning in the texture of the story itself. She had said all there was to say — but she would have never offered that much if Mr. Lytle hadn't asked her.

After I began to know her better, I realized it was simply not in her nature, especially while she was in the process of finding her own way in fiction writing, to sit

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in judgment on another writer's story. In the years after she became a lady-of-letters, the darling of the *Sewanee* and *Kenyon* and *Partisan Reviews*, manuscripts from hopeful young writers appeared regularly in the mail, and many of the writers of these came to the door of the farmhouse outside Milledgeville, Georgia, with or without an appointment, seeking advice and criticism. At times, their manuscripts accompanied her on the trips to the hospital. Although she was to say many times that the last thing she wanted to be was a critic, she never turned anyone away. Her concern with those who would write, as a friend has noted, was "a perennial kind of service."

I saw Flannery very little that fall except at the Monday afternoon Workshop sessions, and occasionally on Sunday noon at the Mad Hatter Tea Room, that used to be up over Bremer's Clothing Store, where I worked as salad girl. Flannery's boarding house didn't serve meals on Sunday, and so she came there. I can remember meeting her only twice on the campus or the street. Once she was going to the library to check out *Dead Souls*. She said Robie Macauley recommended that book as one every writer should read, "so I reckon I'd better do it." (Years later she was to say that she supposed Gogol was an influence.) And the other time she was coming out of Woolworth's Five and Ten Cent Store where she had bought one cake of Palmolive soap. (I've thought about that single purchase since then, and it seems to me it says something about the uncluttered life she always lived. I doubt if Flannery ever bought two of anything at one time, unless it were peacocks or swans or bantam chicks. Her room at Iowa, when I saw it that one time, expressed the same kind of monastic simplicity: the neatly made bed, the typewriter waiting on the desk. There was nothing extraneous in that room except a box of vanilla wafers beside the typewriter. She nibbled on cookies while she wrote, she said, because she didn't smoke.)

That Christmas we got on the same Rock Island train out of Iowa City. I didn't have a first-class ticket, but Flannery convinced the porter it would be all right for me to sit in the parlour car with her. *Convinced* is not exactly the right word here, at least not in a verbal sense. She simply said it would be "right nice" if he would "allow" me to sit with her as far as Chicago so we could talk. I had been kicked out of more than one parlour car by porters who righteously guarded the first-class privileges of their car from the common lot of travelers, and I expected to be this time. I'm not sure if the porter even looked at me, maybe with a brief flick of his eyes, but he gave his approval to Flannery without an instant's hesitation.

The three hours or so it took to get to Chicago was to be the longest single period of time I would ever spend with Flannery, but if I had hoped that we would be talking all the way I soon knew otherwise. Part of the time she was caught up in the winter landscape as it flashed and vanished from the window. We sat in wonderfully comfortable highback swivel chairs, and sometimes turned them toward the car itself to watch the other passengers and the porter. Flannery was intently interested in the porter. "They know exactly what they're doing all the time," she said. "No dilly-dallying atall." I think she was to put something of that observation into the character of the porter who confronts Hazel Motes in the first chapter of *Wise Blood* — the novel which was beginning to take shape that year at Iowa. The *Wise Blood* porter knows, for instance, that it takes him exactly seven minutes to make up a berth.

But Flannery did talk *some* during that train trip. She said that while she was an undergraduate student at Georgia State College for Women (now known as Woman's College of Georgia) in Milledgeville, she'd always thought of herself as a cartoonist, although she was also writing short stories then. "I sent a lot of cartoons to the *New Yorker*," she said, "but they never bought any. Just sent me a lot of encouragin' rejection slips." When she came to Iowa to graduate school in 1945, she had really expected to get a degree in journalism and had taken courses in Advertising and Magazine Writing. But she'd also signed up for the Workshop and Paul Engle's course in Understanding Fiction, and after the first semester she began to work on a degree in creative writing. (Her thesis of six stories, all but two now published, is dedicated to Mr. Engle.) She said she didn't begin to think of herself as a fiction writer until after *Accent* had taken that first story, "although I reckon I got a long way to go yet before I'm what you'd call good at it."

She told me the funny story of the chicken she'd had when she was five years old that could walk both backward and forward. Pathé News had come all the way to Georgia to make a newsreel of her and it, and Flannery doubted if anything else in her life would ever surpass the triumph of being filmed and shown around in theaters all over the country. (She was later to use the same anecdote to open the article she wrote on peacocks for *Holiday* magazine.) "I also had a pet quail once," she said, "by the name of Amelia Earhart, but she couldn't do anything unusual."

And she talked about her family. Her father had died the year before Flannery was graduated from high school. She had no brothers or sisters. She and her mother, whom she referred to as Regina (Flannery also called her father by his first name of Ed), owned a dairy farm outside Milledgeville called Andalusia which was run by a displaced family from Poland. She started to describe the family home in Milledgeville where she and her mother lived (they didn't move out to Andalusia until after Flannery's illness) until she remembered the snapshot she had in her purse. She showed it to me, and it fulfilled my Scarlett O'Hara image of what a Southern mansion was like: its graceful white verandas encircling both the first and second stories, and the four towering Ionic columns in the front. It was known as the Cline House, she said, by her mother's maiden name. Flannery was glad to be going home that Christmas. She looked very pretty, more like a college girl than the convent girl, almost tall in a blue plaid suit and a tan polo coat.

The trip seemed to end before it had hardly started. When I said goodby to her at LaSalle Station, where I

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changed trains to go on to Indianapolis, I was more puzzled than ever how this quiet little girl from Georgia, who had lived an even more sheltered life than I'd thought, could know so many things about the people "from the other side of the tracks" in her very promising short stories.

Margaret Meaders, one of Flannery's journalism teachers at Georgia Women's College and a family friend, tried to explain that mystery in an article in the spring issue of *Colorado Quarterly* in 1962. She wrote:

> Apparently, Flannery never forgot any person she really looked at or any rhythm of speech she ever heard or the meaning of any small episode of the human comedy she ever witnessed. And she has looked and listened and perceived and then interpreted with amazing skill and understanding, either because of or in spite of having been 'well born,' carefully reared, widely educated.

But such a statement leaves out one other important factor, I believe now, and overlooks what Flannery said in an interview that appeared in the fall of 1960 in *Censor*: that imagination is *also* a form of knowledge. "I don't think you have to know [the people you're writing about] very well," she said then. "You discover them."

What she meant about getting to know your characters as you "discover" them or, in other words, as you write about them, was particularly true in Flannery's writing. The process of how she discovered her characters through writing can be seen in a study of her work concerning the character of Hazel Motes of *Wise Blood*. She first began the "discovery" of Hazel in a short story at Iowa, entitled "The Train," which is contained in her MFA thesis. It was later published in the April 1948 issue of *Sewanee Review*, the first of five stories that were to appear in that magazine during her lifetime. The final version we have of it is as the opening chapter of *Wise Blood*, published in 1952. In the four or five years intervening between the story and the novel, Hazel Motes emerges from the self-conscious country boy who wishes his dead mother could see him eating in the diner to the religious fanatic trying desperately to rid himself of the stalking ragged figure of Jesus at the back of his mind. Although he retains his original country manner of the backwoods in the novel, his character now seems deepened by the sullen and contemptuous tinges with which he relates to the world, and which make it possible for him to say to the woman he shares a table with in the diner: "If you've been redeemed, I wouldn't want to be." Flannery's discovery of Hazel Motes was so complete that he could no longer be confined within the limits of the short story.

2.

My friendship with Flannery continued the next semester. I would have liked to have gone to the movies with her or had a Coke with her, but it simply didn't occur to me that things like that could ever be a part of her life. I did, however, begin to consider myself her closest friend on the campus. Her favorite place to go in Iowa City was out to the City Park. Once, I walked out there with her on an especially bleak February Sunday afternoon to look at the two sad and mangy bears, the raccoons, and the special foreign chickens they had. It seemed a particularly desultory thing to be doing, and I was puzzled at how completely absorbed and interested Flannery was that day looking at these things which I knew she'd looked at many times before. She was still working on the novel then, of course (which was to be *Wise Blood*), although she never talked about it, and I knew nothing at that time about the zoo and park scenes in that book until I read it a few years later. But, I also realize now, her fondness for the zoo went beyond the fact that she may have been getting "material" for her work. Years later, in letters to me, she was to recall the City Park as almost the only asset Iowa City had to offer. The following letter begins with a comment on Iowa City housing and is dated December 28, 1952. She wrote:

> *. . . I remember those boarding houses in Iowa City very well and all the cold rooms I looked at. My landlady, Mrs. Guzeman* [at 115 E. Bloomington Street], *was not very fond of me because I stayed at home and required heat to be on — at least ON. It was never UP that I remember. When it was on you could smell it and I got to where I warmed up a little every time I smelled it. One of these days I would like to see Iowa City again, but only for the zoo where those game bantams were & the bears donated by the Iowa City Lions Club. I am raising peafowl myself. They are beautiful and contrary and expensive but I justify the expense on the grounds that I don't smoke or drink liquor or chew tobacco or have any bad habits that cost money . . . . One of these days I hope they'll be all over the place . . . .*

Flannery's love for unusual and exotic fowl is now legend, of course. In a very few years she did have them "all over the place," at Andalusia, a story she was to tell in a charming essay, "Living with a Peacock," which appeared in the September 1961 *Holiday*. The morning after I had read that, I came upon, quite by accident, a bright little ceramic peacock sitting in a gift shop window in Albuquerque. I sent it to her that day. A letter came by the return mail:

> *I am crazy about the peacock, even down to the flower he has just managed not to step on. They have very big feet and if they step on a flower, that's the end of the flower. What they don't step on, they eat so it's as long as it's short. I'm delighted with it and now I can say I've got them inside and out . . . .*

Robert Fitzgerald uses excerpts from her correspondence in his Introduction to *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, the posthumous volume of short stories, in which she often breaks off discussion about the work she was doing at the time with — "I've got me five geese," or "I have twenty-one brown ducks with blue wing bars" — almost as if writing fiction were the digression from

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the greater endeavor of raising peacocks and a one-eyed swan and ducks with blue wing bars, instead of the other way around. Sister M. Joselyn, O.S.B., writing in the memorial issue of *Esprit*, Winter 1964, was to say: "Perhaps . . . the peacocks freed so much for our delight that was in Flannery O'Connor, helped her so greatly to show us what she was, became her 'objective correlative,' if one wants to be literary about it."

I think it is interesting, too, that in the pent-up fury of the O'Connor landscape: the stark pasture on the edge of the dark woods, which Fitzgerald says "reappears like a signature in story after story," the bilious indignation of sun and sky and clouds with what goes on below — in this antithesis of the Garden of Eden to which man has fallen — there appears one peacock who perhaps alone defies her threatening universe. He is in "The Displaced Person" of *A Good Man Is Hard To Find*, kept by Mrs. McIntyre "out of a superstitious fear of annoying the Judge [her husband] in his grave. He had liked to see them walking around the place for he said they made him feel rich." And for the old priest in the story, the peacock is almost a Christ-figure:

> 'So beauti-ful,' the priest said. 'A tail full of suns,' and he crept forward on tiptoe and looked down on the bird's back where the polished gold and green design began. The peacock stood still as if he had just come down from some sun-drenched height to be a vision for them all. The priest's homely red face hung over him, glowing with pleasure.

Whatever the peacocks were to Flannery O'Connor, they added an interesting dimension to her life and gave her immense pleasure. She loved to send their tail feathers to the children of friends. Robert Penn Warren, in his tribute to Flannery in the memorial issue of *Esprit*, wrote that she had sent his little girl, whom Flannery had never seen, "a bright piece of a peacock's tail." My children, too, in their turn, were to receive the long delicate package, so painstakingly wrapped, and as their delighted eyes met that "tail full of suns" for the first time, it seemed to me that she had introduced them to the exotically beautiful as surely as the richest bazaar of Araby might have. In the *Holiday* article, Flannery has said that "A peacock on a fence post is a superb sight. Six or seven peacocks on a gate are beyond description." But a single tail feather from this king of the birds, removed from its full dazzling context, manages to retain, more than anything else I can think of, something of the splendor of the whole. In the pictures of Flannery taken for the press, frequently a peacock stands at her feet. She painted her favorite one in the self-portrait, and he stares as unflinchingly at the world as does his mistress. In describing the *Eee-ooo-ii! Eee-ooo-ii!* of the peacock's voice, she has said: "To the melancholy this sound is melancholy and to the hysterical it is hysterical. To me it has always sounded like a cheer for an invisible parade." (Before Flannery died, she gave two of her peacocks to the Cancer Home in Atlanta, run by a group of nuns called the Servants of Relief of Incurable Cancer which was founded by Nathaniel Hawthorne's daughter, Rose. Flannery's mother writes me that "they give much joy to the cancer patients in their last days." The rest of the peacocks still reign at Andalusia, and are "looked after" by Mrs O'Connor and Flannery's uncle.) If peacocks made Flannery feel rich, like the Judge in her story, it was in a way that money could never have.

Sometime in March of 1962, she was to write again, "If I ever get back to Iowa City, it will be to look at those Chinese bantams in the Park." One of these days the City Park in Iowa City ought to consider dedicating its collection of strange looking chickens to the memory of Flannery O'Connor. That would be a very nice thing for them to do.

3.

That spring in the Workshop I heard Flannery read for the first time. It was a chapter from the novel she was working on and had made into a short story for the occasion (although it turned out to be for all time, since no trace of it ever turned up in either of her novels.) She called the story "The Woman on the Stairs," and it was under this title that it was published the following year in the August 1949 *Tomorrow*. The story was to appear again in the spring issue of *Shenandoah* in 1953 with the title "A Stroke of Good Fortune," and again with this title as one of the ten stories in the collection *A Good Man Is Hard To Find*, 1955. Flannery dedicated that volume to the Robert Fitzgeralds — "Nine stories about original sin, with my compliments . . . ." as she was to say to them later in a letter quoted by Mr. Fitzgerald in his Introduction to *Everything That Rises Must Converge*. I have often wondered which one of those ten stories Flannery excluded from that category of original sin, but it certainly would not have been "The Woman on the Stairs" we heard that day. Although the story has since been described as perhaps the most purely comic of any of her stories, the odyssey of Ruby Hill on the stairs, this woman "shaped nearly like a funeral urn," proclaims the sorry human state which underlies most of her characters who suppose that they are in control of life and are calling all the shots.

In many of the stories Flannery was to write later, she permits a moment of vision to descend on the main character — very like the Joycean epiphany — in which he may see himself clearly for the first time. The moment of insight, when her characters see themselves as sinning beings, comes from the working of grace for them. It is achieved through things which cannot be predicted. It is something mysterious which can not be elucidated. Grace comes to the Grandmother of "A Good Man Is Hard To Find" in her recognition of the Misfit as her own child. It comes to Mr. Head of "The Artificial Nigger" through the artificial nigger, and to Mrs. Turpin of "Revelation" in the pig pen. But it does not come to Ruby Hill as she sits at the top of the stairs looking "down into the dark hole, down to the very bottom where she had started up so long ago," for she hears only the leering echo of her own empty words. Ruby Hill then may be one of Flannery O'Connor's truly damned

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characters, and the story, although exemplifying elements of the purely comic, becomes tragical in the sense that the character is denied any glimpse of self-understanding, and therefore salvation. She sits at the top of the stairs literally full of nothing, feeling the roll in her stomach ". . . as if it were not in her stomach. It was as if it were out somewhere in nothing, out nowhere, resting and waiting with plenty of time."

But few, if any, of us knew that afternoon in the Workshop when Flannery read this story that it was about original sin, that her vision embraced the early Christian concept of man's loss of innocence with the rejection of his first parents from the Garden, that she really did believe in evil and damnation and redemption. We knew none of these things, and I, for one, did not even know that day — and not until several years later — that Flannery O'Connor was a Roman Catholic.

Why then were we so strangely moved by her reading that afternoon which I suppose was the most memorable Monday the Workshop has ever had, before or since? As I remember her voice now, its slight Southern drawl enhancing the country idiom she was just beginning to perfect and was always to use, both in her characters' dialog and as a kind of indirect discourse, and giving a humorous reinforcement to the irony in that story, I realize that her stories are always intensely oral in the highest sense of the story-telling art. It is a great loss that no recordings were made of Flannery reading her fiction. But, of course, her voice alone could not account for the feeling we had that afternoon that we were in the presence of a significant writer.

Perhaps what she said in an interview with Joel Wells, appearing in *Critic*, August-September 1962, on the Christian writer's basic problems best explains our acceptance of "The Woman on the Stairs" that day, even though we were ignorant at that time of her particular vision and frame of reference:

> *One of the Christian writer's basic problems is that he is trying to get the Christian vision across to an audience to whom it is meaningless . . . Nevertheless, he can't write for a select few. His work will have to have value on the dramatic level, the level of truth recognizable by anybody. The fact that many people can't see anything Christian about my fiction doesn't interfere with many of them seeing it as fiction which does not falsify reality.*

Flannery considered herself a realist above all else. Her characters, no matter how freakish and bizzare they may seem on the surface, or how commonplace and white trashy — no matter how unsettling — speak home dark truths and, if anything, become almost too lifelike. She herself once indicated that no really good story could ultimately be accounted for in terms of a right theology. As Robert Drake writes at the close of *A Critical Essay*, "What makes Miss O'Connor's stories good and at times brilliant is that, in her own way, she does seem to have man's number — and the world's." Because her lonely fiction magnifies the drab and the colorless, we are stirred to a recognition of ourselves in the human predicament. As Ruby Hill climbs the dark steep stairs, fighting off the knowledge of her pregnancy which she equates with death, so do we all in some lonely instant struggle with that old paradox that life begets death. We, too, live in the funeral "urns" of our bodies.

After Flannery finished reading the story, we sat there until Andrew Lytle gave meaning to our silence by saying Workshop was over for the day. For once, there was not going to be any critical dissecting. Flannery disappeared out the door to go back to her room at Mrs. Guzeman's. Most of the others took off for the Brown Derby on Dubuque Street, which was the writers' hang-out in those days. The Workshop afternoon was over. That we had said nothing about Flannery's story was a tribute to her genius. But, the other girl writer and I wanted there to be something more — some more tangible token of our admiration. We went around Iowa City on that late spring afternoon, walking into people's yards as if they were public domain, to gather arms full of flowering branches — taking only the most beautiful — and we carried them up to Flannery.

4.

At the end of that semester, in June of 1948, she left Iowa City, and I never saw her again. But our correspondence was to begin, continuing until her death in 1964. Robie Macauley, in the memorial issue of *Esprit*, speaks of Flannery's "magnificent comic sense — a sense of humor that often comes out in her published work but which had an even greater freedom in her private letters." She did not usually write literary letters as such; rather they were letters for giving the news, their low-keyed humor often directed at herself. Her letters to me, and I regret that they were to diminish through the years, were to reveal her special kind of temperament and — as I know now — courage, in a way that knowing her in Iowa City had not.

The next Christmas, 1948, found her at Yaddo, and she wrote:

> *It would be nice to meet you again this year on the train. However, I am glad I won't be fooling around with any trains this Christmas. I am not budging from this place. The Yuletide Poorhouse fare is very decent. The cook will be off and we three will be sent to the New Worden Hotel for dinner. We have a Christmas tree but will not hang up any stockings. We three are myself, Robert Lowell, and a stray painter.*

I had seen a picture in *Life* of Truman Capote perched in a tree at Yaddo sometime within that year and had written to ask her if he was still there. The same letter continues:

> *No Truman Capote, thank you. He had departed before I got here. I read his novel this summer and regretted wasting the time. I think it's poorly written even for such fake stuff . . . Don't by any means let American Letters get your five bucks. They haven't gotten mine. If their first issue doesn't come out within the next five years, I am going to write them to send*

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me back the story. [She had sent them "The Woman on the Stairs"] . . . . *I live on a new time scale now. A week amounts to about forty-five minutes, or visa versa. It has advantages which I sense but haven't the brain to define.*

Another letter early in January announced that *Partisan Review* would be publishing "The Heart of the Park" the next month. This was also a chapter from *Wise Blood,* which she had made into a short story. "I may not get me a whole novel out of this," she wrote, "but maybe I'll get a few stories. A friend asked me the other day what my procedure was for writing. I said 'well, I mostly do a lot of staring at the typewriter.' That about sums up this business."

Flannery was really out to make it as a writer, and by the next spring she was living in New York and "working like a well disciplined mole. I'm staying at a horrible YWCA that smells like an unopened Bible, having left Yaddo for good and great relief, a story I would like to tell you if I ever see you again." I sent her an announcement of my marriage in June that summer, 1949, and she wrote back:

I think it's delightful that people still get married. Several people I know are doing it. The last time I offered my official nuptial politeness I congratulated the bride and my mother said that was very poor form, that you only congratulate the groom. Please congratulate the groom for me and give yourself some best wishes. I asked Mr. Macy's Store to send you a silver butter spreader.

She was working hard on the novel, and the letters I had from her that summer referred to it as "this slow novel I'm working on." Sometime in July (often her letters were dated with just the name of the day or month, seldom the complete date) she wrote:

This slow novel proceeds with all due caution. The chapter you heard about the woman on the stairs [she was still including it as part of the novel at this time] *will be in the August issue of Tomorrow. I got it back from American Letters after seeing an issue of same. Don't let them get your five bucks . . . . I understand that Tomorrow is very anxious for stories and would use four an issue if they could get them. If you're still in this practice (?) you might try them . . . . I'm glad you got the butter spreader. I was beginning to think that Mr. Macy had decided to keep it for himself.*

In the fall of that year Flannery wrote that she was living in Connecticut with her friends, the Robert Fitzgeralds. The "slow novel" was still with her, but she had sold another chapter of it to *Partisan Review:*

My book comes along very slowly but it comes along. I mean it to have the faults of a second novel instead of a first. Then my second can have the faults of a third. You see the advantage in this . . . . Partisan Review has kindly consented to print another chapter that I call "The Peeler" in their December issue. Don't ever get started on a novel unless you don't mind dragging out the agony . . . .

That Christmas, on another, but more fateful, train trip going home to Milledgeville, Flannery became desperately ill from the first onslaught of what would be diagnosed as lupus. I knew nothing of the train incident at that time — not until I was to read of it in Fitzgerald's Introduction to *Everything That Rises Must Converge,* after her death in 1964. She was to make only the most casual reference to her illness, and that infrequently, in her letters through the years. Most of what I learned of it came from others, and that was usually reassuring. I never knew how serious it actually was. Once I was to hear that the disease had been arrested by miracle drugs and that soon she would no longer be on crutches. Lupus was the disease that had killed her father who had died after only three years of illness, in 1941 at the age of 45. But the drugs Flannery was to have, had not yet been invented for him to benefit from. This news, in its promise that she would be spared for a longer life than his, was comforting in itself.

My first indication that Flannery was ill came in a letter dated January 30, 1950 (one of the few in which she gives complete reference to the time), only six weeks after the onset of lupus. She wrote that my last letter, after being forwarded four or five places, had reached her —

. . . at an opportune time: I was in the hospital for a three week stay after a kidney operation. Now I am at home again, just beginning to walk around. I feel about like one of those chickens that hangs upside down in meat market windows, but by late March or April I hope to go back to Connecticut . . .

But there was nothing in that letter to imply that she was really seriously ill, and I was not unduly alarmed that I did not hear from her again for nearly a year. If I had heard during this time that Flannery was near death, as she was, I suspect I would not have believed it. There was too much that she hadn't written for that to happen to her for quite a long time yet. A letter came that fall, in October, sounding very much like the old Flannery. I was still unaware that her disease had been diagnosed as the fatal lupus, and so I missed the irony of the last line — until later. She wrote:

. . . I got a letter from a friend the other day who said she wasn't interested in reading about morons & perverts, and unfortunately the dear girl has a point. The better you are able to write, the harder it gets and the more dangerous it is. But I plan to live like the buzzards — from day to day. Cheers.

In checking back through the letters I had from Flannery, I find that this was the first time she closed with "Cheers." Her ending in letters before this had been "Yours" or "Regards;" I believe there is a very good possibility that she began the use of "Cheers" as a sign-off in her informal correspondence fairly soon after she knew she had lupus.

It was not until sometime in the summer of 1951 that I was to hear about Flannery's disease by name, and that

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it was a rare disease of the blood vessels and kin to arthritis and rheumatism. My informant also said she was being treated with a cortisone derivative, ACTH, and that there was every chance for her complete recovery. Since there is a long history of arthritic disorders in my own family, most of whom remain reasonably productive and live to a ripe old age, Flannery's diagnosis was not particularly alarming. Neither was her answer to my letter of inquiry for more information:

> *You heard right about what I've got, but I can't see that it affects my brain any. The least you should get out of a disease is a better brain. I told my doctor last year I didn't think I had enough blood to make do with. He said "well, you don't have much but you got enough for a Southern girl." That's about what it amounts too* [sic]. *Cheers to all.*

In November of that year, my first child, Stephen, was born, and Flannery wrote a funny letter on the nature of children, "They size up the parents very soon," she warned, "and usually can tell right away they're always one up on them. Don't let that happen to you." Along with the letter came a copy of H. Belloc's *Selected Cautionary Verses* (poems about a lion named George who ate children) and inscribed on the cover with "For Stephen from Flannery." Both the letter and the gift were further reassurance that there couldn't be very much wrong with Flannery. The Belloc book had been published in England, and I had a vision of her gleefully placing a transatlantic order for dozens of copies to have on hand for the blessed events of friends. Flannery was just beginning to get involved in peacock raising at this time, which also seemed to me something someone very sick would not be able to do. The same letter continues:

> *. . . I have 3 hens and 3 cocks but of these, 4 are still peachicks and they have to be three years old before they lay. I haven't lost any yet but they are supposed to have a fondness for pining away. One of my young ones spits blood on occasion, but I haven't found out what produces an occasion. One of these days I'll hope to send Mr. Stephen a feather with an eye in it . . . .*

In April of the next year, 1952, a chapter from the "slow novel" appeared in *New World Writing I*, which she called "Enoch and the Gorilla." In May *Wise Blood* was published by Harcourt, Brace, the novel that had been started so long ago at Iowa. "I'm glad to be rid of it once and for all," she wrote. "Now I'm going to spend my time in less agonizing ways. The first thing I intend to do is to order me some more peachicks from Florida . . ."

But the second thing Flannery did that year was to write "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" and "The River." She also began to work on *The Violent Bear It Away*. The stories appeared in 1953, the first in *Kenyon Review*, the second in the *Sewanee*. That was one of Flannery's best publishing years. There were five stories in all, the other three appearing in *Modern Writing I*, *Harper's Bazaar*, and *Shenandoah, IV*. Paul Engle selected "The Life You Save May Be Your Own" for the O. Henry Prize Stories in 1954, the first of six stories that would win Flannery the O. Henry Award in the next ten years. Of these, three were first prize stories: "Greenleaf" (1957), "Everything That Rises Must Converge" (1963), and "Revelation" (1965).

By the end of 1953 the little girl from Georgia must have surely known that she had come far enough along in fiction writing to be "what you'd call good at it." I believe somewhere she even said so in an interview when some well-meaning but simple-minded soul asked her why she was a writer. Flannery is said to have snapped back, "Because I'm good at it."

In the time left to her, she was to write fourteen short stories and a second novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*. A third novel, *Why Do The Heathens Rage?*, was left unfinished. In those ten years, her fiction was published in England, France, and Germany. She received two Kenyon Fellowships, a grant from the National Academy of Arts and Letters, a $10,000 grant from the Ford Foundation. Her short stories were anthologized year after year. They appeared five times in Martha Foley's yearly *Best American Short Stories*. Smith College gave her an honorary degree. Flannery didn't write to tell me of these achievements. I heard about them, or read about them. I found her short stories in the literary quarterlies at university libraries; I bought her books as they came out. Once, at least, I must have offered up some literary criticism of sorts on something I had read, probably *Wise Blood*, for I have a letter from her in which she wrote: "Thank you for your kind words of interpretation. A friend of mine told me not so long ago that she found that chapter totally lacking in meaning. She said it didn't make any sense . . . ."

As Flannery's literary life continued toward an international fame, and mine became more and more engulfed in domesticity, I began to feel hesitation at correspondence. In those years I had various occupations to tend to. For awhile I was a reluctant den mother. Once I was vice-president of the local PTA. I collected money on my street for the Cancer Drive, for Heart Sunday, for Muscular Dystrophy. I served on various committees for this and that. I was a sometime member of the Faculty Wives Club. There was considerable humor in all of these experiences because I failed in most of them. But — just as I had once thought Flannery didn't go to movies or drink Cokes, so I then believed these activities of mine were outside the realm of her existence as a writer. To write her of them would be to impose. Our letters became farther apart. It was my fault that this was to happen — not Flannery's.

In reading through her letters of the last years, I find, more often than not, that they begin with her concern in not hearing from me. In the fall of 1961 I had written suggesting the climate of New Mexico might be good for her and that she should come for a visit. Almost by return mail, dated October 29, she wrote:

> *I was real cheered to hear from you at last and at length. You are good to think of the climate there as a possibility for me but I don't have anything that a climate will affect. I am getting along real well. This year I acquired a pair of swans and I burst with pride*

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of ownership. I plan to become as great an authority on swans as I now consider myself on peacocks . . . .

In March of 1962, another letter begins:

I thought I was never going to hear from you again . . . . I am spending this month laboring over some talks I have to give next month — one at North Carolina State College and one at Converse. I have this one rather moth-eaten talk that I pull out and rearrange slightly for each place. This time the places are so close together that I am having practically to write a new one. Not the way I would like to be spending my time . . . . We had spring last month and are having winter this month. The old ladies in town blame these vagaries of the season on the atum *bomb.*

Cheers and much affection

By the year of her death, our correspondence had dwindled to an exchange of Christmas notes. I did not know she was dying. On the evening of August 3, 1964, as I sat down to read the *Albuquerque Journal*, my eyes were drawn instinctively to a tiny AP story at the bottom of the front page, datelined from Milledgeville, and I read: "Flannery O'Connor, famous short story writer and novelist, died this morning at the age of 39 . . . ."

Truthfully, I was always a little in awe of her literary genius, beginning back at the time I had sat beside her in the Workshop at Iowa. I am sorry for that now. I think now she would have welcomed all my news of children and household trivia. Letters from others had become her lifeline into the world outside the boundaries of Andalusia and Georgia. Those she wrote in return gave expression to the warm whimsicality of her nature, gave much to enjoy and to love. Robie Macauley, speaking of Flannery's letters in his *Esprit* tribute, said, "I have never known anyone whose wit had such edge and at the same time such kindness." Too often we forget the essential human beingness of those who achieve a measure of greatness. Their life styles, we believe, transcend the ordinary, when, in fact, it is the common touches of reality that give sustenance, especially to the artist. The failing is a human one — one that Flannery probably understood and forgave. At least, I like to think so.

WILLIAM WITT

THE WATER SPIDER

We fear to lose only
the fear of him, scuttling
gray and brown across
his stones beneath the water

he draws a line we do not
pass. At the edge of deeper
pools where water would slide
its slender fingers about our hips

we hold back, like children,
though once you approached him,
(the water licking its way between
your toes) to watch him search
his darker surface: it is his love

he seeks, you said, to consume it:
make me a poem about him.
I will wait a better season,
for him to sleep, I said.
In winter, I said, I will.

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"Wildcat" is one of the six short stories which comprise the thesis Flannery O'Connor submitted (at the University of Iowa) for her Master of Fine Arts degree in June of 1947. The story here appears in print for the first time—an event made possible by the generous permission of Robert Fitzgerald, Miss O'Connor's literary executor. Besides "Wildcat", the MFA thesis includes "The Geranium" (Miss O'Connor's first published story, in the summer 1946 number of ACCENT*), "The Turkey" (which appeared in the November 1948 issue of* MADEMOISELLE *as "The Capture"), "The Train" (first printed in the* SEWANEE REVIEW*, April 1948, and later to become the first chapter of the novel* WISE BLOOD*), and two stories which remain unpublished, "The Barber" and "The Crop". The photograph of Miss O'Connor was taken in 1947, and was graciously provided by the author's mother.*

WILDCAT

A Story by Flannery O'Connor

Old Gabriel shuffled across the room waving his stick slowly sideways in front of him.

"Who that?" he whispered appearing in the doorway. "I smells fo' niggers."

Their soft, minor-toned laughter rose above the frogs' hum and blended into voices.

"Cain't yo do no bettern that, Gabe?"

"Is you goin' with us, Granpaw?"

"You oughter be able to smell good enough to git our names."

Old Gabriel moved out on the porch a little way. "That Matthew an' George an' Willie Myrick. An' who that other?"

"This Boon Williams, Granpaw."

Gabriel felt for the edge of the porch with his stick. "What yawl doin'? Set down a spell."

"We waitin' on Mose an' Luke."

"We goin' huntin' that cat."

"What yawl huntin' him with?" old Gabriel muttered. "Yawl ain't got nothin' fit to kill a wildcat with." He sat down on the edge of the porch and hung his feet over the side. "I done tol' Mose an' Luke that."

"How many wildcats you killed, Gabrul?" Their voices, rising to him through the darkness, were full of gentle mockery.

"When I was a boy, there was a cat once," Gabriel started. "It come 'round here huntin' blood. Come in through the winder of a cabin one night an' sprung in bed with a nigger an' tore that nigger's throat open befo' he could holler good."

"This cat in the woods, Granpaw. It jus' come out to git cows. Jupe Williams seen it when he gone through to the sawmill."

"What he done about it?"

"Started runnin'." Their laughter broke over the night sounds again. "He thought it was after him."

"It was," old Gabriel murmured.

"It after cows."

Gabriel sniffed. "It comin' out the woods for mo' than cows. It gonna git itssef some folkes blood. You watch. An' yawl goin' off huntin' it ain't gonna do no good. It goin' huntin' itssef. I been smellin' it."

"How you know that *it* you smellin'?"

"Ain't no mistakin' a wildcat. Ain't been one 'round here since I was a boy. Why don't yawl set a spell?" he added.

"You ain't afraid to stay here by yosef, is you, Granpaw?"

Old Gabriel stiffened. He felt for the post to pull himself up on. "Ef you waitin' on Mose an' Luke," he said, "you better git goin'. They started over to yawl's place an hour ago."

II

Come in here, I say! Come in here right now!"

The blind boy sat alone on the steps, staring ahead. "All the men gone?" he called.

"All gone but ol' Hezuh. Come in."

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He hated to go in—among the women.

"I smells it," he said.

"You come in here, Gabriel."

He went in and walked to where the window was. The women were muttering at him.

"You stay in here, boy."

"You be 'tractin' that cat right in this room, settin' out there."

No air was coming through the window, and he scratched at the shutter latch to open it.

"Don't open that winder, boy. Us don't want no wildcat jumpin' in here."

"I could er gone wit 'em," he said sullenly. "I could er smelled it out. I ain't afraid." Shut up wit these women like he one too.

"Reba say she kin smell it herself."

He heard the old woman groan in the corner. "They ain't gonna do no good out huntin' it," she whined. "It here. It right around here. Ef it jump in this room it gonna git me fust, then it gonna git that boy, then it gonna git . . . ."

"Hush yo' mouth, Reba," he heard his mother say. "I look after my boy."

He could look after hissef. He warn't afraid. He could smell it—him an' Reba could. It'd jump on them fust; fust Reba an' then him. It was the shape of a reg'lar cat only bigger, his mother said. An' where you felt the sharp points on a house cat's foot, you felt big knife-claws in a wildcat's, an' knife teeth, too; an' it breathed heat an' spit wet lime. Gabriel could feel its claws in his shoulders and its teeth in his throat. But he wouldn't let 'em stay there. He'd lock his arms 'round its body an' feel up for its neck an' jerk its head back an' go down wit it on the floor until its claws dropped away from his shoulders. Beat, beat, beat its head, beat beat beat . . .

"Who wit ol' Hezuh?" one of the women asked.

"Jus' Nancy."

"Oughter be somebody else down there," his mother said softly.

Reba moaned. "Anybody go out gonna git sprung on befo' they gits there. It around here, I say. It gittin' closer an' closer. It gonna git me sho."

He could smell it strong.

"How it gonna git in here? Yawl jus' frettin' for nothin'."

That was Thin Minnie. Nothin' could git her. She'd had a spell on her since when she was small—put there by a conjer woman.

"It come in easy ef it wanter," Reba snorted. "It tear up that cat-hole an' come through."

"We could be down to Nancy's by then," Minnie sniffed.

"Yawl could," the old woman muttered.

Him an' her couldn't, he knew. But he'd stay an' fight it. You see that blin' boy there? He the one kill the wildcat!

Reba started groaning.

"Hush that!" his mother ordered.

The groaning turned into singing—low in her throat.

Lord, Lord,
Gonna see yo' pilgrim today.
Lord, Lord,
Gonna see yo' . . . "

"Hush!" his mother hissed. "What that I hear?"

Gabriel leaned forward in the silence; stiff, ready.

It was a thump, thump and maybe a snarl, away, muffled, and then a shriek, far away, then louder and louder, closer and closer, over the edge of the hill into the yard and up on the porch. The cabin was shaking with the weight of a body against the door. There was the feel of a rush inside the room and the scream was let in. Nancy!

"It got him!" she screamed. "Got him, sprung in through the winder, got him in the throat. Hezuh," she wailed, "Ol' Hezuh."

Later in the night the men returned, carrying a rabbit and two squirrels.

III

Old Gabriel crept back through the darkness to his bed. He could sit in the chair a while or he could lie down. He eased down in the bed and pushed his nose into the feel and smell of the quilt. They won't no use to do that. He could smell the other jus' the same. He had been smellin' it, been smellin' it ever since they started talkin' about it. There it was one evenin'—different from all the smells around, different from niggers' an' cows' an' ground smells. Wildcat. Tull Williams seen it jump on a bull.

Gabriel sat up suddenly. It was nearer. He got out of the bed and pushed to the door. He had bolted that one; the other must be open. A breeze was coming in and he walked in it until he felt the night air full in his face. This one was open. He slammed it shut and pushed the bolt in. What was the use to do that? Ef the cat aimed on comin' in, it could git there. He went back to the chair and sat down. It come in easy ef it wanta. There were little draughts all around him. By the door there was a hole the hound could git under; that cat could gnaw it through an' be in befo' he got out. Maybe ef he sat by the back do', he could git away quicker. He got up and dragged his chair after him across the room. The smell was near. Maybe he'd count. He could count to a thousand. Won't no nigger for five miles could count that fur. He started counting.

Mose an' Luke wouldn't be back for six hours yet. Tomorrow night they wouldn't go; but the cat was gonna git him tonight. Lemme go wit you boys an' smell him out for you. I the onliest one kin smell 'round here.

They'd lose him in the woods, they'd said. Huntin' wildcats won't no business for him.

I ain't afraid er no wildcat er no woods neither. Lemme go wit you boys, lemme go.

Ain't no reason to be 'fraid to stay here by yosef, they'd laughed. Ain't nothin' gonna git you. We take you up the road to Mattie's ef you scaird.

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Mattie's! Take him to Mattie's! Settin' wit the women. What yawl think I is? I ain't afraid er no wildcat. But it comin', boys; an' it ain't gonna be in no woods—it gonna be here. Yawl wastin' yo' time in the woods. Stay here an' you ketch it.

He suppose to be countin'. Where he lef' off at? Five hunnert an' five, five hunnert an' six . . . Mattie's! What they think he is? Five hunnert an' two, five hunnert an' . . . .

He sat stiff in the chair with his hands gripped tight to the stick across his knees. It won't gonna git him like he was a woman. His shirt was stuck wet to him, making him smell higher. The men had come back later in the night with a rabbit and two squirrels. He began to remember the other wildcat and he remembered as if he had been in Hezuh's cabin instead of with the women. He wondered was he Hezuh. He was Gabrul. It won't gonna git him like Hezuh. He was gonna hit it. He was gonna pull it off. He was gonna . . . how he gonna do all that? He hadn't been able to wring a chicken's neck for fo' years. It was gonna git him. Won't nothin' to do but wait. The smell was near. Won't nothin' for old people to do but wait. It was gonna git him tonight. The teeth would be hot an' the claws cold. The claws would sink in soft, an' the teeth would cut sharp an' scrape his bones inside.

Gabriel felt the sweat on himself. It kin smell me good's I kin smell it, he thought. I settin' here smellin' an' it comin' here smellin'. Two hunnert an' fo'; where he lef' off at? Fo' hunnert an' five . . . .

There was a sudden scratching by the chimney. He sat forward, tense, tight-throated. "Come on," he whispered, "I here. I waitin'." He couldn't move. He couldn't make himself move. There was another scratching. It was the pain he didn't want. But he didn't want the waiting either. "I here," he—there was another, just a small noise and then a flutter. Bats. His grip on the stick loosened. He should have know that won't it. It won't no farther than the barn yet. What ail his nose? What ail him? Won't no nigger for hunnert miles could smell like he could. He heard the scratching again, coming differently, coming from the corner of the house where the cat hole was. Pick . . pick . . pick. That was a bat. He knowd that was a bat. Pick . . . pick. "Here I is," he whispered. Won't no bat. He braced his feet to get up. Pick. "Lord waitin' on me," he whispered. "He don't want me with my face tore open. Why don't you go on, Wildcat, why you want me?" He was on his feet now. "Lord don't want me with no wildcat marks." He was moving toward the cat hole. Across on the river bank the Lord was waiting on him with a troop of angels and golden vestments for him to put on and when he came, he'd put on the vestments and stand there with the Lord and the angels, judging life. Won't no nigger for fifty miles fitter to judge than him. Pick. He stopped. He smelled it right outside, nosing the hole. He had to climb onto something! What he going toward it for? He had to get on something high! There was a shelf nailed over the chimney and he turned wildly and fell against a chair and shoved it up to the fire place. He caught hold of the shelf and pulled himself onto the chair and sprang up and backwards and felt the narrow shelf board under him for an instant and then felt it sag and jerked his feet up and felt it crack somewhere from the wall. His stomach flew inside him and stopped hard and the shelf board fell across his feet and the rung of the chair hit against his head and then, after a second of stillness, he heard a low, gasping animal cry wail over two hills and fade past him; then snarls, tearing short, furious, through the pain wails. Gabriel sat stiff on the floor.

"Cow," he breathed finally. "Cow."

Gradually he felt his muscles loosen. It got to her befo' him. It would go on off now, but it would be back tomorrer night. He rose shaking from the chair and stumbled to his bed. The cat had been a half mile away. He won't sharp like he used to be. They shouldn't leave old people by theyselves. He done tole 'em they won't gonna ketch nothin' off in no woods. Tomorrer night it would come back. Tomorrer night they would stay here an' kill it. Now he want to sleep. He done tole 'em they couldn't get no wildcat in no woods. He the one tole 'em where it gonna be. They'd a listened to him, they'd done had it by now. When he die he want to be sleepin' in a bed; didn't want to be on no floor with a wildcat stuck in his face. Lord waitin'.

When he woke up, the darkness was full of morning things. He heard Mose and Luke at the stove and smelled the side meat in the skillet. He reached for his snuff and filled his lip. "What yawl ketch?" he asked trenchantly.

"Ain't caught nothin' las' night." Luke put the plate in his hand. "Here yo' side meat. How you bust that shelf?"

"Ain't busted no shelf," old Gabriel muttered. "Wind to' it down and waked me up in the middle of the night. It been due to fall. You ain't never built nothin' yet stayed together."

"We sot a trap," Mose said. "We git that cat tonight."

"Yawl sho will, boys," Gabriel said. "It'll be right here tonight. Ain't it done kill a cow a half a mile from here las' night?"

"That don't mean it comin' this way," Luke said.

"It comin' this way," Gabriel said.

"How many wildcats you killed, Granpaw?"

Gabriel stopped; the plate of side meat tremored in his hand. "I knows what I knows, boy."

"We git it soon. We sot a trap over in Ford's Woods. It been around there. We goin' up in a tree over the trap every night an' wait 'till we gits it."

Their forks were scraping back and forth over their tin plates like knife-teeth against stone.

"You wants sommo' side meat, Granpaw?"

Gabriel put his fork down on the quilt. "No, boy," he said, "no mo' side meat." The darkness was hollow around him and through its depth, animal cries wailed and mingled with the beats pounding in his throat.

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John Lindberg

THEMATIC BLACK ANTHOLOGIES

We will review these ten books by arranging them by theme rather than chronology or kinds of writing. While blacks are responsible for bringing all but one of them through the press, the books are meant to supply illustrations for opposed values in the struggle to win recognition from whites. In setting this contrast, we can dismiss the two oldest from thematic relevance, as they appeared at the close of the Harlem Renaissance before the contemporary cultural conflict arose. Of the remaining eight, four each are either accommodationist or black nationalist, and one each form a pair that offers an explicit confrontation.

The two earliest are poetry anthologies; both editors offer poetry as the best evidence that blacks have earned a respectable place in the American literary tradition. Conventional literary acceptance is their theme. They do not think of claiming recognition for a peculiarly black subculture. Both editors thankfully dismiss dialect verse as a sentimental anachronism black poets no longer need upon mastering standard patterns.

Johnson comes closer to modern black nationalist sentiment than does Cullen. While glad to be rid of minstrelsy dialect, he approves of poets who use the "common, racy, living, authentic speech of the Negro," and shows that World War I awakened blacks to their folk heritage and to race consciousness from the "well nigh irresistible" pressure of whites, who should recognize their appropriation of black gifts in the popular acceptance of the Uncle Remus stories, and of jazz and blues. Johnson hopes that the blacks can create "that which has universal appeal and influence" through "symbols from within," while recognizing that unlike his peers outside America, the black here has been excluded from the cultural growth of the nation and forced to the racial issue to survive as an artist.

Yet, with Cullen, who believes there is no black poetry as such, but only poetry in the standard English tradition which the black is now ready to join, Johnson offers his poets as proof of the black's cultural competence to swim in the mainstream. To the contemporary black, accommodationist as well as nationalist, Cullen and Johnson appear insensitive, for they can use terms like "standard tradition" and "universal appeal" as if the whites were willing to admit sincere admirers into their preserve.

Nevertheless, these anthologies first gave wide publicity to some of the best black poets. *Caroling Dusk*, originally published in 1927, draws most of its contributors from those Du Bois called "the talented tenth," in the genteel tradition of Edwardian verse, but it also prints Jean Toomer, Joseph Seamon Carter, Jr., some early Langston Hughes, and several folk-inspired poems by Sterling Brown, Yet the color is kept gray: only Fenton Johnson's polite verse appears, none of his nihilistic, and only "America" of Claude McKay's bitter sonnets. Johnson's book prints numerous early attempts at authentic dialect, includes Fenton Johnson's nihilistic "Tired," several forthright McKay pieces and early expressions of pride in negritude.

The contemporary accommodationist is neither as naive about whites nor as complacent about blacks as Cullen and Johnson seem to be. He admits that the

The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers/An Anthology from 1899 to the Present, edited and with an introduction by Langston Hughes. Little, Brown. $2.95 (paper)

Black Fire, An Anthology of Afro-American Writing, edited by Leroi Jones and Larry Neal. William Morrow. $8.95

Black Words That Say: Don't Cry, Scream, by Don L. Lee, foreword by Gwendolyn Brooks. Broadside Press (Detroit). $1.50 (paper), $4.50 (cloth)

The Book of American Negro Poetry, edited by James Weldon Johnson. Harcourt, Brace & World. $5.95

Caroling Dusk/An Anthology of Verse by Negro Poets, edited by Countee Cullen. J & J Harper Editions, Harper & Row. $8.00

From the Ashes: Voices of Watts, edited by Budd Schulberg. Meridian-World. $2.65 (paper)

New Black Playwrights/An Anthology, edited by William Couch, Jr. Louisiana State. $6.95

New Negro Poets: USA, edited by Langston Hughes with an introduction by Gwendolyn Brooks. Indiana. $4.95

The Poetry of the Negro 1746-1949, edited by Langston Hughes and Arna Bontemps. Doubleday. $6.50

Soon, One Morning/New Writing by American Negroes, 1940-1962, edited by Herbert Hill. Knopf. $6.95

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vitality of the blacks is in their folklore and proletarian origins. He takes pride in his unique tradition of resistance to oppression and of indigenous art forms. Yet the very name accommodationist carries with it respect for the values of white culture. Few whites are accommodationists in the sense that they would revalue their ideals to become more acceptable to blacks. Yet the accommodationist views his black heritage as a preparation for admission to a culture that he thinks more rewarding, more viable, broader and more adequate than the one that nourished his innocence.

Such attitudes are of course anathema to the black nationalist, who often comes perilously close to affirming two separate natures of man. The nationalist understands what the accommodationist can never see: that blacks who wish to join the whites will bring about no deep change in American life. The nationalists are much more realistic in their grasp of the need for political confrontation, though they are often anti-intellectual in the literary means they choose to express their myths of activism.

As critics trying to assess the validity of black literary work, we must distinguish those creations written to aesthetic norms we all feel from those composed to a program. The only way to avoid racist bias is to seek out the appeal to our common sensibilities, without concern whether or not our sensibilities follow "universal values." Of course we may need the charity to assume that some of the authors can excite sensibilities we have not exercised or have even preferred to ignore. In a time when the main literary tradition seems to be experiment, we can easily confuse a genuine reshaping of experience with a mere rehashing of traditional forms. But if literature has any permanence, we can expect the creator to find his materials as often in the outcry of direct conflict as in the repose of aesthetic calm.

Langston Hughes has given us three recent accommodationist anthologies. They all lay heavy stress on the fact of an independent black tradition as long and as deeply involved in the republic as the white one. *The Poetry of the Negro 1746-1949* begins with the colonial period and ends with contemporary poets both native and foreign who have in common the fact of being black and of usually writing on the theme of the color line. Part of the poetry represented deals with the color line by the oblique method of practicing white forms, particularly the sonnet and the love lyric, with no hint of black color. Here the mantle of Cullen and Johnson lies heavy on the verse. But with the 30s, the verse becomes more explicit on the issue of injustice. There is also a section of poems by whites on the color line. Although the anthology prints a number of translations from Caribbean and Latin-American poets of merit, its accommodationist bias excludes controversial younger writers in favor of a list of mediocre poets included largely to provide historical evidence of the existence of an unbroken tradition of dull verse by black writers. But a beautiful poem by Hughes could be taken as a dignified statement of the accommodationist theme: "Let America Be American Again."

The Best Short Stories by Negro Writers is more impressive, though it gives a shorter tradition. The accommodationist theme is heavy: of 47 stories, 27 are explicitly about the color line (some form of direct clash between blacks who wish to succeed and whites who deny them), and 12 are about some form of injustice or psychological crippling derived from the color line, though an actual clash does not occur. No more than 6 deal mainly with the lives of blacks lived among themselves. Hughes's preface explains this ratio, for there he speaks of the exclusion of black writers from all media. No black writer has grown rich on the most dramatic theme of our time. *Invisible Man* has never been made into a movie. Blacks are rarely invited to write scenarios and book reviews. Only in foreign countries are black American writers widely read and accepted as conventional subjects for literary scholarship. Small wonder, then, that blacks who wish the same prestige as that of their white colleagues turn so often to themes of exclusion.

But the quality of their work suffers. Many of the stories read like case histories. Others come close to sentimentalism. Some are obscure from the attempt to express resentment politely. A few even accept white stereotypes of lower-class blacks, a time-worn accommodationist tactic. Yet some of the most powerful writing I know appears in this volume: the little-anthologized "Flying Home" by Ralph Ellison; Ernest J. Gaines's "A Long Day in November," about a black family's ritual for saving a marriage; Alice Walker's unique "To Hell With Dying," about an old man periodically revived from death by the kisses of children.

The unavoidable impression of *New Negro Poets: USA* is that of a painful literary culture. Gwendolyn Brooks's foreword claims a dilemma for the poets of being both Negro and artists, then says cryptically: "But no real artist is going to be content with offering raw materials." This comment seems to be an apology for work half-realized but offered the reader with the same rationale as that for printing most young writers: to give them public display, encourage them, and invite criticism. The themes are more self-confident, taking less of their impetus from the fake motive of the color line, but most of the poems appear to write about rather than write out of their concerns.

A true aesthetic sensitivity, rather than a literary sophistication, appears in the work of a few, like Mari Evans, Dudley Randall, Leroi Jones, and Calvin Hernton. Conrad Kent Rivers closes the book with "Four Sheets to the Wind and a One-Way Ticket to France," a poem that evokes the timeless charm of carefree adventure and self-discovery that blacks appear to experience in their trips out of America.

The next three black nationalist anthologies move away from conventional literary culture with a self-consciousness that is also a convention. *From the Ashes: Voices of Watts* is the only book edited by a white, Budd Schulberg, who set up his ghetto workshop as a

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safety valve on black rage. Like Clay in Jones's *Dutchman*, Schulberg realizes that every black poem or story is a bullet not fired, a brick not thrown, is a missive in what he calls a constructive cultural revolution. Such a therapeutic use of language necessarily results in naive confessionals, often touching, but more often the uninspired journalistic and oversimplified exposé type of writing found in Ann Petry and other post-war epigoni of Richard Wright. But these Watts writers have no literary awareness, so that their confessions occasionally smite through the words without the aesthetic chill of a structured point of view. Practicing writing as an immediate form of self-liberation, they display a frank, previously ignored source of experience, especially Sonora McKeller on the life-style of the Watts ghetto, Harley Mimms with down-home bawdry for satire, and Birdell Chew on extremes of deprivation not usually found in polite writing.

Strictly speaking, Don Lee's book is not an anthology, but a collection of his recent poems, notable as much for its prefatory manifestoes as for its poetry. The title is our first instance in our list of books of *black* or *Afro-american* as a group-slogan. The accommodationist preserves the older term *Negro*, flouted by the nationalist as a white man's invention. The dedication of the book appears to be an attempt to certify those black artists who are bona fide nationalists, for it is a list of nearly all currently practicing left wing black writers. Presumably those not on the list are beneath contempt. Concerned readers will find the list a useful reference. Gwendolyn Brooks in her foreword has moved left from her cryptic statements in *New Negro Poets*. She now justifies Lee's lack of "elegance" as a virtue in a folk-poet who by choice finds beauty in the ugly and shuns the perfect form of traditional verse as a form of death. "The juice from oranges is called orange juice. The poetry from black poets is black poetry," she says simplistically, hailing Lee as a black prophet who evolves his art in the spontaneous creation of it. Considering that Brooks is herself such a conscious artist, I find her disingenuous in such a pastiche of famed catchwords from literary manifestoes of the past, seeming to mingle Tristan Tzara indiscriminately with Victor Hugo and William Wordsworth. Lee's own preface is replete with such courageous echoes of Romanticism as: "Black poetics/for the many to come" and "Blackpoetry in its purest form is diametrically opposed to whi-te poetry." Both Brooks and Lee seem unaware that their slogans merely insert a racist bias into familiar literary revolts. And they are indeed racist, claiming that new forms must be developed to speak directly of experience that only blacks can know, and claiming that the only criterion of literary excellence is the acceptability of the political ideas in their relevance to the black revolt.

Naturally, such content-bias makes dull poetry. But we would be wrong to dismiss all of Lee's work as repetitive. He has energy and inventiveness in shaping his bursts of oratory into rhythmic groups of lines echoing the speech of the ghetto. Many poems, notably "Assassination," "The Revolutionary Screw," and "Black Sketches" are exciting uses of chant, wordblends, phrase reversal moving into and out of babble with satiric success, abbreviations to aid the spoken elisions right for the lilt, and eidetics where phrases, curses, and skats from the street fit authentically into the oratorical matrix of the ongoing movement of the poem.

New Black Playwrights also ranges a gamut from simplistic propaganda to more successful adaptations of experimental techniques. Douglas Turner Ward's two plays, "Happy Ending" and "Day of Absence," are trite situation comedies marred by the thematic glibness and social irrelevance of most TV drama, where Ward has had a successful career as an actor. Lonnie Elder in "Ceremonies in Dark Old Men" has made a more authentic adaptation of life to the stage in his tale of the endless fight to make it in the ghetto, but the play remains unresolved and overlong, using too many conventional themes rather than deeply developed character conflicts. Though the characters are black, the play has false echoes from *Death of a Salesman*, *The Entertainer*, and even perhaps *Anna Christie*. William Wellington Mackey is more original, if only because "Family Meeting" is one of the rare attempts to deal with the topic of the black bourgeoisie. The play calls for farcical staging, and the lines are little more than stereotyped slogans. Visually it may be effective, but verbally it is banal, even using a pointlessly vulgar synopsis of Richard Wright's "Almost A Man" as the text of one scene.

But the remaining two plays in the collection are superior. "A Rat's Mass" by Adrienne Kennedy puts the black dilemma into an original form. The work is a total extrojection of a psychic disturbance into an artifact of self-explanatory cross-references and developing symbols. At first reading it seems as arbitrary as a dream, but upon repeated experience of it, this brief play exhibits intellectual control over manic disorder. Ed Bullins too, in "Goin'a Buffalo," gives another example of his ability to find the existential force in the bestial chaos of the black underworld. These are plays of enduring beauty.

The last two books on our list join issue on the grounds of what constitutes value in black literature. Literary excellence like that of Adrienne Kennedy and Ed Bullins arises from the free play of imagination over experience. If there is such a thing as black literature — and I think there is — as distinct from literature that happens to be written by people of pigmented skin, it is distinct because its writers dare face the life-conditions of an inhumane society and from that very horror create their artifacts. Too often the nationalist is as guilty as the accommodationist of writing from his rejection of the lives of the majority of the blacks rather than an identification with them. I do not mean that art must ignore politics and class, but rather that art must know its object and must check its values against its object. Both accommodationist and nationalist are too prone to look to a future realization of a

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political or cultural program as the justification of the moment's artistic practice. The effect is blatant.

The introduction of *Soon, One Morning* (milennial title!) does not mention black nationalism, and praises Langston Hughes because he has "transcended the limitations of folk material." Thus the editor looks to a day of full admission to white culture: "A profound disservice is done to the Negro writer, now and in the future, if any criteria are invoked except those of art and literature." This sentiment would be unexceptionable if the introduction, despite a dedication to Richard Wright, had not already disowned him as the limited author of a flawed masterpiece, after a brief review of black writing that finds most of it aesthetically naive and thematically limited. Further, the "new" authors are like those in the earlier accommodationist collections. Nearly every piece gives the struggle of middle-class blacks for white recognition, and few of the authors included appear on Don Lee's honor roll. Finally, to bolster the claim of growth beyond "racial parochialism," many pieces are proudly announced as editor's requests. I suppose the requests are acceptable in an anthology, but they certainly underscore its tendentious purpose.

The pace of black history and cultural sensibility has swept far beyond the critical comments of the distinguished blacks whose essays open the book. Sometimes their pronouncements are embarrassing to a man who wishes both camps to reduce their quarrel. For example, Saunders Redding calls *The Outsider* Wright's "one unqualifiedly bad novel" without seeming to note its appeal to militants nor its interesting reflections of French novelistic practice. John Hope Franklin deplores the fact that black scholars have been compelled to abandon advanced studies and concentrate on black materials in order to make academic reputations in white schools. He says truly that such restriction in the past has arisen from white racist feeling, but his main regret seems to be black exclusion from scholarly areas dominated by whites. St. Clair Drake argues that indigenous Afro-american folk-culture must inevitably disappear as more blacks aspire to and achieve white acculturation. Of course these ideas are all more controversial than their authors represent them to be, and seem inspired by an unspoken repugnance toward black nationalist feeling.

The other two sections besides that on the essay give fiction and poetry. The poetry is more impressive, but devotees of black fiction will be delighted to find two treasures, one each by Richard Wright and Ralph Ellison. Wright contributes five episodes from an unfinished novel designed to be a sequel to *The Long Dream*. These episodes are scenes from Fishbelly's life in Paris and show an unexpected gift for humor. Ellison's contribution is a section from *Invisible Man* that he had to condense and redistribute in the published version of the novel: Mary helping the hero escape from the glass box at the factory clinic. Mary develops as an earthier, more demanding character, and the hero's escape is a more light-hearted development of the novel's subterranean motif. The poetry section of the anthology is uniformly distinguished with major work by Gwendolyn Brooks, Melvin Tolson, Robert Hayden, Carl Holman, Langston Hughes, and Leroi Jones.

Some pieces in *Black Fire* appear to have been written especially for the anthology, but credits are also given for permission to reprint from journals like *Negro Digest, Transatlantic Review*, and *Liberator*. "Most of the writers represented in this book are under the age of thirty-five," says the blurb, which quotes critics who seem to value the book for its cultural import rather than its literary merit; and truly, militance is the watchword and sometimes the only criterion.

The plan seems to counter that in *Soon, One Morning*, for it is divided the same way, literary and social essays, poetry, fiction, and an additional fourth section of drama. This anthology has received hostile reviews from liberal white critics because the majority of the inclusions have no literary motive at all. The fiction is largely a series of short fantasies on various forms of revolution and revenge, and the poetry too is a collection of outcries. The poets are unusually numerous in this big book, but hardly any has the wit and skill of Don Lee. There are a few exceptions, notably Calvin Hernton, Sun-Ra, David Henderson, Carol Freeman, and Norman Jordan. Joe Goncalves has renewed the old tradition of iconographic verse, arranging his chants in spirals with backwards as well as forwards spelling as the words wind through allegorical designs. I find the experiment pleasing. It makes new aesthetic demands by broadening the concept of reading to include response to the patterns that illustrate the words.

The essay selection too is unusually varied, but represents little original thought. Rather, we find popular ideology. One of the more interesting essays, by James Stewart, speaks of the need for impermanent works of art to represent the passing moments in the revolutionary struggle. Thus the art will not glorify itself nor the artist but the progress of revolution as the one meaningful social reality. This essay is a good rationale for the short plays at the end of the anthology. Another essay, by James Boggs, on social theory, attempts to reinterpret Marx by putting blacks in the place of the proletariat, claiming that white workers have joined forces with management to form a new master class. There is also a long, thoughtful essay by Harold Cruse, representing an early stage of the thinking that resulted in *The Crisis of the Negro Intellectual*. But most of the essays are less coherent. They do, however, have an important common theme, that the blacks have not found leaders among accommodationists, and that non-violence is an inadequate means for change. I find it significant that the editors include no essays by Eldridge Cleaver. Perhaps they could not as the anthology and *Soul On Ice* were published nearly at the same time. But I doubt that Cleaver's avoidance of black racism would be congenial to the editors who compiled such a diatribe against the white man.

The one truly interesting feature of the anthology is the collection of short plays. They are uneven in qual-

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ity, but most exemplify the street theater that is a creative innovation in the black arts movement. As explained by Ed Bullins in *The Drama Review* (Summer, 1968), street theater seems a contemporary black version of *commedia dell'arte* and the open air morality play. Improvisation, mime, and functional staging are the theatrical practice. Subjects are revolutionary caricature of enemies of the people. A new development is the use of babble syllables and bawdry for a surrealistic exposé of pretense. While such practices may seem to debase language and acting, the plays make such demands on the actors as to constitute a new art form. The anthology performs a real service in making available here the works of Larry Neal, Leroi Jones, and Ed Bullins, and other similar plays not usually collected.

A critic who measures the programmatic claims against the aesthetic merit of black writing cannot avoid recognizing familiar features of literary history. The nationalist cries of revolution lose some of their urgency when they echo manifestoes of the past. The accommodationist claim of cultural maturity loses in sincerity when it belittles creativity because of its proletarian coloring. Both sides misplace their rationale in extraliterary considerations and fail to do proper honor to their best writers, whose work is valued no more than that of mediocre colleagues because all serve a factional — and factitious — goal. Meanwhile the gifted artists express their individual vision in the peculiar motifs, dialects, and symbols of their immediate cultural experience. Perhaps it is not too much to hope that these creators are the ones who will prevail and whose work will help all factions to remember to be human together.

Childhood Is Not Forever, by James T. Farrell. Doubleday. $5.95
Follow the Running Grass, by Georgia McKinley. Houghton Mifflin. $4.95
The Dorp, by Frieda Arkin. Dial. $6.95
The Collected Stories of Peter Taylor, by Peter Taylor. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $10
The Queen Is in the Garbage, by Lila Karp. Vanguard. $4.95
Sick Friends, by Ivan Gold. Dutton. $6.95

Last year James T. Farrell published his strongest novel in many years, *A Brand New Life*. It was a book which proved once and for all, if it needed proving, that Farrell is capable of far more than variations on the naturalism he is so often charged with writing. The novel was structured on an elaborate symbolic framework, and was thoroughly informed by Freud. Despite the usual stylistic limitations one encounters in Farrell, especially his repetitions, the book's subject and symbology revealed him to be a consciously modern novelist. (One tends to forget Farrell's marvelous Joycean novel, *Gas-House McGinty*, published in 1933).

His publishers have chosen to follow *A Brand New Life* with *Childhood Is Not Forever*, a selection of stories written largely in the 1950s. While all the tales are not as impressive as the last novel, or many of Farrell's fine earlier stories such as "The Scarecrow" and "Calico Shoe", the collection does not deserve the indifference it has been met with in the popular press.

Most of Farrell's large body of work has been written with purpose and from a perspective. *Childhood Is Not Forever* fills in some of the cracks between his inter-related novels, especially the Eddie Ryan and Danny O'Neill cycles. Both characters are encountered within these stories. The book is also more overtly political than Mr. Farrell's recent novels, with the McCarthy era, the Bolshevik revolution, and Adlai Stevenson's campaigns all serving as occasions for fiction.

But, as the collection's title implies, the most important agent in the stories is Time, which robs us of opportunities, changes all things, separates souls, and tyrannizes over us. A story such as "Reunion Abroad", for instance, a tapestry woven about the disparity between appearance and reality, is ultimately a statement on time's corruption of us all. The title story is a memorable portrait of a bigot and would-be politician, a man who resists change in any form. He sees all Europe as a rathole and all Democrats as Stalinists. He would like everything to be just as it was when he grew up in Chicago, and resents any changes time has wrought in his friends. Yet his enemy is essentially kind to him, for he dies an early death, being spared further disillusionment. Yet had he known he would die young, he would have feared time all the more.

"Monologue of an Old Pitcher" portrays yet another man out of sympathy with the times he lives in. It is a short character study of one who deplores the lack of respect for tradition and the absence of proper hero-worship by today's youth. Yet Farrell's monologue ends with a twist: the pitcher claims the 1920's to be the best of all times to have been young, because that was when Al Capone was alive.

Loneliness pervades the lives of Farrell's gallery of characters. "Sunday Evening" explores the loneliness of a writer's life, and posits the thesis that the witch-hunts of the McCarthy era crippled much creativity in America. "Small-Town Taxi Cab Driver" portrays a man of faith who lives a life with little to hope for, while in "Vivian Thanks God", a woman longing for romantic fulfillment in life sublimates her desire through her children. "Jump to Chicago" is the story of a weak-willed man trapped by his occupation and his appetites. His release is through digging his grave with a fork. Not all of Farrell's characters find a form of sublimation, however. "Ray Taite" is a more overtly naturalistic story, in the tradition of Farrell's earliest novels, showing the roots which determined the future of two boyhood playmates, each "traveling separate roads toward a future that controlled them."

The collection's finest story, and one which deserves to be preserved, is "Native's Return", a long piece uniting the three dominant strains of loneliness, politics, and the tyranny of time found in the shorter stories. It is a fitting conclusion to the volume. Highly autobiographical, "Native's Return" explores one day

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in the life of a writer named Edward H. Ryan (James T. Farrell). Ryan's return to Chicago as a celebrity triggers comment on the inexorable flow of time and events, and America's propensity for treating the vulgar and trivial with the same gravity accorded the genuine and important. With high seriousness, the story exposes the financial insecurities of a very good writer in America, and shows how a person who is, at least in the homes of the well-educated, a household word can wonder where next week's groceries will come from. The story captures completely the temper of the 1950s. The middle-aged writer throwing handfuls of Stevenson buttons into a crowd which doesn't even bother to pick them up is a powerful synecdoche. The defeat of Stevenson and all he stood for parallels the defeat of the artist and the intellectual in America.

Though *Childhood Is Not Forever* is not one of Farrell's major books, nor even a consistently good book of stories, this reviewer welcomes its appearance in the Farrell canon, And "Native's Return", "Jump to Chicago", and "Ray Taite" deserve a place beside Farrell's best short fiction.

A truly superior book of short stories was Georgia McKinley's *The Mighty Distance*, published in 1965. With unassuming artistry Mrs. McKinley explored her fictional concerns: the loss of the natural world, the threat of nuclear annihilation, bigotry and man's inhumanity to man, and the dangers of materialism. The Texans in her stories, in their insular and patriarchal communities, exploited Negroes, and schisms of all kinds fascinated her — not only between black and white, but young and old, male and female, rich and poor.

Mrs. McKinley embellishes upon all these themes in her first novel, *Follow the Running Grass*, a tightly-written novel ostensibly about a Texas family, though the book reverberates with meaning and implication, with the Texas Book Depository figuring prominently, almost as a leading "character", thereby rendering the book a comment on Dallas and ultimately on America.

The novel's plot is simple: a liberal-minded Manhattan attorney is summoned home to Texas by the occasion of his mother's failing health. His encounters with his own flesh and blood, both living and legendary, force him to change his world view. His family's history, four generations' worth, is played in counterpoint to his own emotional crisis, and his colorful relatives are etched even more vividly than he. The black/white conflict is dramatized ferociously in the struggle between his senile mother Zillah and her faithful black servant Jessie. Zillah is determined to wear out Jessie with her unreasonable demands; Jessie is determined not to flag.

Another triumph is the characterization of Baby Boy, a pimply, Thunderbird-driving high school boy already immersed in political works of bigotry and injustice, collecting money to stop them all — "the civil rightsers and the niggers and Jews — and the socialist govamunt's encroachments on our fundamental right of property . . ."

But the most chilling moments are provided by Uncle Theo, who keeps a game preserve of wild African animals *and* poor white children to fire upon from a special cement-block tower, and who takes pot-shots at cruising Negroes from his car while driving on the turnpike.

These incidents should indicate the pitch of the novel. A bit shrill, a bit overworked and overdone, *Follow the Running Grass* falls short of the perfection of the best stories in Mrs. McKinley's collection. Yet the novel nevertheless is a fascinating and compelling account of the special violence and blindness that characterize certain Texans. It takes a genuine talent to project Delmon Goode from his established character as champion of the black people to his ultimate conviction of betrayal and determination to kill the next black he sees. Yet the reader sustains belief in Delmon, and wishes that the America shown here did not exist.

Frieda Arkin's *The Dorp* is also the first novel of one of our better story writers, and her first book. Miss Arkin would have been better served by a collection of her stories, as yet unpublished in book form. Dedicated to Thornton Wilder, *The Dorp* is crammed full of observations, characterizations, and conversations which take place in the town of Kuyper's Dorp, where the Americana is thick as treacle. There is no formal beginning or ending, no leading protagonist, no major plot, just sluices of life. We assume that Miss Arkin knows how to write something which could be called a novel, and chose not to. The characters, we take it, were supposed to carry the book. The problem is that Miss Arkin's town drunk, her young girl gotten pregnant, and her adulterers are not sufficiently void of stereotype to carry it off. The jacket blurb makes the unfortunate comparison with Sherwood Anderson's *Winesburg, Ohio*. Unfortunate because Anderson's Wing Biddlebaum, Jesse Bentley, Louise Trunnion, and George Willard remain in mind decades after one first encounters them. Miss Arkin's townspeople (what *were* those names?) are forgotten once the book is closed.

Peter Taylor has gathered sixteen of his earlier stories and five new ones for his *Collected Stories*. Together they represent a considerable accomplishment in the short story form. The usual adjectives to apply to Taylor are "modest" and "quiet" — as indeed some of these stories are, such as "Their Losses." But there is nothing modest about the scope or intentions of "A Spinster's Tale" or "Venus, Cupid, Folly and Time", two of Mr. Taylor's excursions into repressed sexuality and incest; nor is there anything particularly quiet about his achievement in "The Fancy Woman" or "The Elect", two studies in disillusionment and loss of identity.

Those stories seem the best in a rewarding volume, a book which every one who loves the short story or aspires to write it (and the two classes are not necessarily inclusive) should own. It would be ungrateful to dwell on the inferiority of Taylor's most recent work. Stories like "First Heat", "There", "At the Drugstore",

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"Heads of Houses" and "Dean of Men" lack the gossipy quality, the rich texture and the illuminating ruminations of the stories cited. It would have been well had Taylor included instead some of the 17 short stories which appear in his earlier volumes, but are not included here. Still, the *Collected Stories* is an extraordinary volume from an able craftsman, a writer whose Tennessee is as vivid as Georgia McKinley's Texas or Farrell's Chicago — not through exterior description, but internal landscaping, the baring of minds and hearts. For Taylor's primary fictional concern is shown to be family relationships in Tennessee's middle class. Using the home as microcosm, marriage and social contact as catalysts, he is an American Jane Austen. In the conflicts created by the South's change from an agrarian society to an urban one, his families — like Faulkner's Dilsey — not only endure, they prevail.

A book that is genuinely "modest", if not "quiet", is Lila Karp's first novel, *The Queen Is in the Garbage*, an anguished short work spanning some fourteen hours in the life of a girl, written in a dribble-of-consciousness manner (you can't really call it a stream, because the memories, allusions and associations which permeate the work are brief, interrupted sketches rather than floodlike passages in power or degree). The novel is patently autobiographical: Harriet, the protagonist, was reared in New York, educated in the northwest, worked for a New York publisher, went to England, and worked for a prestige fashion magazine — all of which precisely dovetails with the author's biography as given on the dustjacket. By remaining so close to herself, Miss Karp has taken several risks and, by and large, succeeded. The protagonist's parents, due to similarity to background and concerns, might have emerged as warmed-over Gold (Herbert) or Friedman or Roth. Instead they exist independently, with the mother's viciousness rather unparalleled in recent novels. She screams at her daughter: "Everything you touch turns to poison. Those disgusting boils. You've got them because you've got a rotten mind and rotten blood . . ."

Harriet's effort to preserve her identity in the face of such parents, so unsuccessful a marriage, and so sadistic a lover is the theme of the book, the mental effort paralleled symbolically by the physical effort of giving birth to a baby girl during an arduous labor. The physical details of the labor are rendered as realistically as the heroine's psychological labor to become born again.

Conceptually and psychologically it is an interesting book. Lila Karp's future as a novelist may depend upon her ability to find another adequate subject, having exploited herself and her family so thoroughly in this first work. And, a much less significant problem, but one nonetheless, is her lack of mastery of dialogue. Too many speeches in *The Queen Is in the Garbage* sound wooden or sudsy:

". . . Harriet, come on. Tell me. What's up? Why are you crying?"

"Because, Tracy. Because it's all gone wrong. Robert's pulled a Doctor Jekyll and Mr. Hyde on me."

"What do you mean, Harriet? What's happening?"

And so forth.

Equally autobiographical, unabashedly so, is Ivan Gold's first novel, *Sick Friends*. Like so many writers of his generation — writers who have managed to live from grant to grant, fellowship to fellowship, without suffering the discomfort of having to earn a living — Gold has no other subject than himself, and unfortunately, he has led a singularly uninteresting life. Someone once said that a good biography of Wallace Stevens would consist of one sentence. Ivan Gold has taken nearly 400 pages to chronicle several years of his life in Manhattan. He catalogues every piece of furniture he has sat on, every jar he has opened, and, what seems far more urgent for Gold to communicate, every woman he has ever slept with, and in what manner he took his pleasure.

Unlike Miss Karp's slender, controlled book, *Sick Friends* suffers from bloat and lack of selectivity. That Ivan Gold, in the persona of the novel's Jason Sams, suffered a writer's block for years is common knowledge. The eventual writing of this novel was no doubt enormously therapeutic. But it offers scant reward for the reader who has paid his $6.95 expecting a controlled work of art, or even an uncontrolled one which has something to say, which can touch the lives of others. There is too little of the craft and compassion which distinguished "A Change of Air" and "The Nickel Misery of George Washington Carver Brown", the two short stories upon which his considerable reputation was based. Despite the heft and weight of *Sick Friends*, Ivan Gold's reputation will have to depend upon those two short tales for some time to come.

—Robert Phillips

The Best American Short Stories 1969, edited by Martha Foley and David Burnett. Houghton Mifflin. $6.95

Command, and I Will Obey You, by Alberto Moravia. Farrer, Straws & Giroux. $5.50

One wonders when reading these recent American short stories whether our culture is still suffering from what might be termed a melting-pot syndrome. Equal opportunity and vertical mobility have long been a matter of national pride; a less-noticed by-product has been a kind of cultural anguish: old country ore has not yielded so easily to the heat of cultural change. Much of our literature comes from within an identifiable subculture, and much of it traces the agony of moving from an old culture to a new.

Many of the stories of the Foley-Burnett volume—some of the most successful ones—reflect this movement. Often they deal with a generation gap that is a culture gap as well. Joyce Madelon Winslow's "Benjamen Burning," for example, demonstrates strikingly the destructive influence of an orthodox Jewish father and mother who cling to the old ways and try to impose them on their children. Isaac Bashevis Singer's "The Colony" conveys some of the sadness of an old culture dying away in a Jewish colony in a remote part of Argentina. Two stories deal with Irishmen: in one, Irish workingmen in the dark

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days of the depression have learned well that they need not apply; in another, Mark Costello's "Murphy's Christmas," the protagonist suffers from, among other things, alienation from his devoutly Catholic mother and his proudly militaristic father. John R. Milton's stark story of the degeneration of the Sioux Indian culture shows a wider cultural gap and, consequently, a more profound anguish.

So many of the characters in these stories are troubled by the past; it is only in agony that they pull themselves away from the limiting environment of their childhood and into the mainstream of life. Alistair MacLeod's "The Boat," perhaps the most effective story in the volume, opens with a passage that brings the past and the present into a wonderful unity:

> There are times even now, when I awake at four o'clock in the morning with the terrible fear that I have overslept; when I imagine that my father is waiting for me in the room below the darkened stairs or that the shorebound men are tossing pebbles against my window while blowing their hands and stomping their feet impatiently on the frozen steadfast earth. There are times when I am half out of bed and fumbling for socks and mumbling for words before I realize that I am foolishly alone, that no one waits at the base of the stairs and no boat rides restlessly in the waters by the pier.

The past in this story is strong and attractive, a fishing village in Nova Scotia, a father of mythic proportion and quality, a mother able and proud and almost fanatically attached to the fishing tradition of her family. But the culture was close, the father hemmed in by it, knowing its limitations and wanting a broader life for his children. Finally he must sacrifice himself to manipulate the boy into college against the mother's will. The sacrifice, however, does not free the son entirely; the strong memory of his fisherman father is there and will not let him sleep, and the knowledge that his lonely mother is still by the sea clinging to the old ways haunts him. The break with the past, with the old culture, is incomplete.

Perhaps, like the fisherman's son, we are doomed to live in the new culture while haunted by our longings for the old. Yet even in this ambivalence there is a kind of stability, preferable to the emptiness and rootlessness of the old couple in Nancy Pelletier Pansing's "The Visitation." Having lived in the closed society of the professional military establishment and having staked their hopes on the future of a single son, the couple is left with nothing when the son dies in Korea and the old Colonel retires. In a strange town, their lives have deteriorated until, as we see them in this story, they have nothing left but the bottle.

Other stories, as one would expect these days, deal with the themes of alienation and abnormality. There are lonely men and women separated from people they love or once loved; there is a brilliant psychologist succumbing to senility, a husband overly fearful of a recurrence of his wife's paranoia, a mental patient working her way to a breakdown and a return to shock therapy, and a woman who has successfully repressed a homosexual urge.

These concerns—alienation, abnormality, the generation or culture gap—are also the concerns of those who write the scripts for our movies and television dramas. But there is a basic difference: these stories focus on the social and human condition of the characters rather than on the lurid and sensational details that so often characterize the offerings of the more popular mass media. There is little experimentation in these stories. With the exception of one esoteric story about art by Bernard Malamud, they follow traditional forms. In form, at least, they demonstrate that perhaps the old ways are the best.

To read the stories of the Italian writer Alberto Moravia is an entirely different experience. Each of the twenty-seven stories of *Command and I Will Obey You* is told by a first-person narrator, a point of view that lends itself well to the problems Moravia probes in this volume: the nature of consciousness, the nature of words and communication, the mystery of visual perception, the merging of dream worlds with reality. The limited vision of the first-person point of view lends an air of mystery to almost all these stories. The reader sees the world through the eyes of the protagonist, but the protagonist may have quirks, his vision may be blurred, his mind unable to cope with the meanings of his perception. Only occasionally are Moravia's characters fully human; often the unreality of their experiences prevents us from identifying fully with them. Neither their senses nor their thoughts are to be trusted. Which is just the point: Moravia asks over and over in these stories what we can depend on. Our words have either too little or too much meaning; our senses play tricks on us, our minds confuse the real world with the world of dreams, the past with the present. Existence becomes mysterious.

Sometimes Moravia's characters exaggerate characteristics that may exist to some extent in us all. In the title story, a man is so dominated by his wife that he is virtually without will, depending upon her to give him orders for every little task. So dependent is he that he cannot endure the thought of her leaving, and he impulsively kills her when she threatens to do so. A character in another story cannot face routine life without his wife, who has died, so he hires a girl to substitute for her in the household routine. Another is so conditioned by his schooling to obey his masters that he cannot function well until he finds a strong-willed employer to whom he can subordinate himself. Moravia recognizes in these characters a need for human contact, but he exaggerates that need into grotesqueness.

Others of Moravia's men have difficulty determining what is real. One old man confuses his dream of the past with the reality of the present and sees his real life as a dream. Another cannot remember who he is or was as he lives from hand to mouth in his old age. "My head is like the pockets of my overcoat: there is a little of everything in it, but everything is broken, useless and often

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mysterious." A third, in an abortive attempt to find dignity, ridiculously creates a past fame that never existed.

The confusion is not limited to the old. Several stories proceed from a premise involving distorted perception. "I am worried by my growing and irresistible capacity for seeing several things at the same moment, that is by my all-seeingness," begins the protagonist of one story. It is a destructive curse, making normal relations with others impossible. A character in another story, "A Thing Is a Thing," sees a mystery of identity in all things. Everything he sees seems to shout out its identity to him. He becomes entirely disoriented by the mystery and everything, including his wife, becomes the same to him.

For other characters words do not help to order reality. One man wants things worded so exactly that his wife is able to manipulate him completely by the exactness of her logic. Another discovers that words are like sheep; subconscious motivations prevent him from saying what he wants to say. Another is a stammerer, and resorts to primitive one-word communication with his wife; they both find such basic communication satisfying.

These are strange and grotesque men that Moravia has created. No one of the stories alone is entirely satisfying to the reader, but taken together they form a pattern. We see a writer exploring the mysteries of identity, perception, and reality. Each story is told from within by a character of a peculiar stamp—one is even told by a dog. But their very peculiarity, while interesting, prevents full identification by the reader with the characters. Rather we feel we have touched something strange and not entirely pleasant. Perhaps it is too unsettling to question so persistently such basic aspects of our lives.

—Patrick A. Brooks

Agapito, by Alvaro Cardona-Hine. Scribner's. $4.50

A well-known writer of books for children, in discussing what makes a successful children's book writer, has said: "There is a sort of memory that does not so much recall as re-experience. This is the writer's memory . . . the child . . . within him." Alvaro Cardona-Hine did not write *Agapito* as a children's book, but it does superbly reflect what Mary Stolz described as a "memory that re-experiences" childhood. The narrative is presented through a series of monologues, presumably by a seven-year-old boy and directed to Agapito, a peasant working on the estate of the boy's father. From the monologues we get a picture of the young boy following in the footsteps of Agapito as the man goes about each day's work, and commenting on the world and the people around them with the artless naiveté of a seven-year-old filtered through the wisdom of an adult re-experiencing the feelings and wonderings of a child.

Although the boy does all the talking, Agapito being always the silent partner, it is the man who comes through as the central character of the book. We see him as the boy sees him: "You were just another peasant, with that scrawny look which makes your kind seem like privates in some immemorial army that never eats."

After their first meeting, the boy's friendship with Agapito grows and he begins to wonder about the differences in their two lives: "How is it that we're friends, Agapito, when nothing that we do is the same? My bed is different, my food, my clothes, my speech. My shoes supplant your calluses and take me places that are closed to you. Does my father's money do all that? And yet, I have heard my father say that we are poor. There must be many kinds of poor people. Maybe even the rich are poor. . . ."

Then as the tale unfolds, we see in ever greater contrast the differences between these two lives. The boy's family moves to the city for a part of the year in order that he may attend school. Although the city intrigues him, he misses Agapito and even has fantasies about Agapito's giving up his meager living on the farm and moving to the city to become a policeman. However, even he realizes that the pleasures of a policeman's life cannot draw Agapito from the "dew sitting on a leaf, and the steam rising from the shanks of your ox, and the pop of the young kernel of corn under your thumbnail. . . ."

Meanwhile, poverty takes its toll of Agapito's family, first through the death of his young son, then the death of his daughter, and immediately following her funeral Agapito's own arrest for manufacturing illicit spirits in order to provide some of the basic needs of his family. The boy observes these tragedies and expresses his understandings in some of the most beautiful passages in the book: "You are not the same Agapito. You are another man, you are a hulk, an empty husk, a spent cartridge. I do not say it reproachfully, you know that. Your eyes deflect all life, your hands are gross inaccuracies wasting away at the extreme end of useless stumps. Sorrow has reduced you to ashes. I go my ways alone. . . . I will wait just as your wife and daughter wait, for a match to come peaking through the cave of darkness."

Throughout the book the author writes with a singing prose that becomes almost poetry in its epigramatic style, combining economy of words and great beauty of imagery. This is a book that is best enjoyed through reading aloud. There is sadness here, a poignant sadness that has within itself a kind of catharsis for the reader. There is also humor, the humor of a child's innocent view of adult foibles: "Leocadia and Fabiana [cooks] came visiting, Agapito. They got into a huddle with Maria and never decided, though they argued without pause, just what dish is skipped when the lady of the house coughs twice in front of company, nor what is that one crucial step in the making of *quelite* soup which can sidestep disaster, nor whose *pozole* could best revive the dead."

Alvaro Cardona-Hine is a Costa Rican by birth. He has published four volumes of poetry and contributed verse to numerous American magazines and reviews. In his dedicatory statement: "To my mother

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and father from the depths of a past which is the present," he sums up the essence of the book, a boy's unfolding world brought to life again by the adult whom that boy became.

—Mary K. Eakin

Shelia, by Gunard Solberg. Houghton Mifflin. $4.95

Corky's Brother, by Jay Neugeboren. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $5.95

Susan Sontag's cocktail quip that it takes a heart of stone to not laugh at the death of Little Nell might typify the reaction of some readers to Gunard Solberg's novel, *Shelia,* and perhaps even to Jay Neugeboren's grouping of short stories and title novella, *Corky's Brother.* Certainly all readers who come to these books should come with a heart in a condition willing to experience fictive situations and people that from time to time leave the reader not knowing whether to laugh or cry, at times wanting to laugh but crying, at times hardheartedly laughing in spite of it all.

Both Solberg and Neugeboren are young writers. But they are not as young as their narratorial personae would suggest; thirty comes closer than thirteen to being both authors' real age. *Shelia* is Solberg's first book and is, strictly speaking, a romance and not a novel. One supposes that this is Solberg's first book because in addition to being a writer, he also teaches high school. (Moreover, it is a good guess, if *Shelia* is any kind of indication, that as an English teacher he is a bit more hip than Mr. Novak.) *Corky's Brother* is Neugeboren's third book. Solberg's setting in *Shelia* is Midwestern, owing something to his background; Neugeboren usually writes about the East—Brooklyn, to be exact.

Solberg's Othello-like romance finds common concerns of the heart such as youth, love, tenderness and violence, complicated not by a Capulet-Montague feud but by race and the spirit of 1969. Shelia Smith, hardly to be thought of as a heroine, is, all things considered, much more like a soulful Becky Sharp than Little Nell. Black, gap-toothed, grooving, supercool with a high-axle rear, that's Shelia—a wayward, teenage, stylized earth mother on the make, flouting Putney High rather than Miss Pinkerton's school, involved in the trauma of a long overdue birth into a world of funk, grit, and mother wit—a camp sight (to Solberg, other characters, herself, the reader) if ever there was one. Shelia wants a different life than that provided by her father, successful M.D. and invincible Uncle Tom whom the reader imagines smoking one White Owl after another. In her escape, which takes her through gay bars and contacts with marijuana pushers like Fabulous Traveling Shoes and a tragically fated rendezvous with a carload of beer-drinking, young rednecks, she presumes to know less than she really does about herself and her white ("joint-effort") boyfriend, long-nurtured WASP, narrator, and self-conceived nebbish, Wayne Divine. And Wayne, who presumes through most of the action to know more than he really does, in doppelganger fashion, paradoxically finds out about himself through his other self, Shelia.

Their love has been not so much star-crossed as color-crossed from the beginning and it is the mutual shedding of mask after mask, game after game, hypocrisy after hypocrisy that sustains the lyrical and psychological vibrations that increase to crescendo in gang rape and then diminish to the guilt-ridden silence of a hospital hallway. Regretfully, Shelia never acknowledges that Wayne, in finally confessing his fear of her blackness and in disavowing the collective guilt of centuries of blackness and whiteness, finds more of himself to give than at any other time in his life. The ironic hardheartedness of Shelia's farewell is all too clear, as she says to Wayne:

> You totally have a warm, personal touch, man. You are a great human being with a truly feeling heart.

But to laugh at Shelia, as she searches for her blackness, and at Wayne, as he searches for his colorless identity, in their camp guises and situations, their encounters with larger than life characters, is also to cry as together they search for themselves through each other's truth. Thus, Solberg's authorial stance is ultimately one of understanding, of maturity, asking the reader to have the heart—vibrating, fibrillating, beating or whatever—to make a similar journey, not just during the book but after he leaves it also.

If *Shelia,* as Bildungsroman with camp interludes, ends with the narrator further along the road to maturity and on a plateau of moral discovery, *Corky's Brother*—at least a miniature Bildungsroman—begins with another milestone of maturation and feeling. The adolescent Howie, narrator not only in this novella but also in many of the accompanying stories, says at the outset, in words sounding from solemnly vibrating heartstrings:

> The first time I ever cried about anybody dying was at Corky Williams' older brother's funeral.

But Howie, even though he seems to have a bit more heart here than before, is consistently a fellow with feelings—softheartedly evolving, one might say. In a story like "Joe," for example, a story about the kindness, loyalty and yet cruelty of a neighborhood gang of boys toward a fifty-year-old delivery boy, Howie is compelled, after having climbed up a fire escape to have a look at Joe's new wife, to speak more words of compassion:

> Windows were open all over—the women were yelling across the courtyard that Joe was going crazy, the guys were yelling at me to make a run for it, but I just stood there, transfixed. Finally I cupped my hands over my mouth and yelled, 'I'm sorry, Joe—I'm *sorry!*' as loud as I could. I don't think he understood me.

Howie, like Wayne Divine, looks *through* and *with* his friends too—friends like Corky, Corky's brother, and Corky's cousin. As one might not expect from the opening sentence of *Corky's Brother,* the love that prompts Howie to tears isn't so much for Corky's brother, Mel, as it is for Corky himself. Certainly Howie and Corky worship Mel, see him as a metaphor of masculinity of equal proportions to a Namath, worship him as a ball player and "swinger" who

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". . . can plug any broad he wants." But in the three days or so surrounding Mel's funeral, Corky and his cousin Sarah Jean (whose heart Howie finds is certainly in the right place) are the ones who initiate Howie into a kind of awareness of the heart he has not felt before.

Of course, there is much in Neugeboren's stories reminiscent of Salinger, Knowles, Malamud, and (in "The Child") of Joyce's "A Little Cloud," or (in "The Pass") of Huxley's "The Claxtons." All is not in the spirit of the fiction of the fifties and earlier, however. "Luther," "The Application," "The Campaign of Hector Rodriguez" get at much the same kind of "body rhetoric" and violent racial confrontation that is found in Solberg. And Neugeboren has the stylistic ability to knife away what the reader knows would be verbal fat yet convincingly assume an adolescent persona; but more impressively, he has the talent to speak in a voice other than white, which shows that he like Solberg searches for the universal vibrations of one human, heart to heart, with another.

—Robert Gish

A Life of Hart Crane, by John Unterecker. Farrar, Straus & Giroux. $15

John Unterecker's new biography of Hart Crane's curt, chaotic life is both massive and microscopic. Nearly eight hundred pages long, *Voyager* provides the bits and pieces that invite and challenge the reader to make some sense of a life Crane himself spent a lifetime trying to make sense of. More importantly, Crane's life compels us to a re-examination of his poetry.

Harold Crane was his father's son. Conventional yet unpredictable, standoffish yet erratically and clumsily affectionate, the elder Crane was an enigma to a son who idealized a father whose ideals he could not fully share. A successful candy manufacturer and the inventor of "Life-Savers," C. A. Crane represented a world of hardnosed practicality, a world of common sense and a sound dollar. In such a world the younger Crane was a dinghy adrift in a sea of battleships and destroyers.

If Crane's father spent his emotions as thriftily as he spent his money, his mother squandered hers. Protective, calculating, at once domineering and vulnerable, the former Grace Hart used her weakness to get what she wanted as her husband used his strength. Like an aging Camille, Crane's mother languished in one emotional crisis after another, playing off the son against the father, the father against the son.

Understandably, the emotional currency in the Crane household in Cleveland fluctuated like the Stock Market of the late 'Twenties. Harold looked to a strong father for stability only to find austerity, or turned to a loving mother for security only to find a loathsome helplessness instead.

In "My Grandmother's Love Letters," Crane attempted to pull together the fragments of his family life, perhaps to find poetically what he could not find personally. The letters of his grandmother, who had so often served as mediator and arbiter in family disputes, were themselves out of a past too far removed to speak of the tensions and turmoil of the present; they spoke instead of a bygone ecstasy but of a warmth that could perhaps be recaptured, if only vicariously.

It would be a delicate undertaking at best; the letters themselves were:

> brown and soft,
> And liable to melt as snow.

Crane was seeking a love made safe and sure by time; if the present was unbearable, the past might give him bearings. But the doubts only increased:

> "Are your fingers long enough to play
> Old keys that are but echoes:
> Is the silence strong enough
> To carry back the music . . .?"

What would be impossible now even for his grandmother would be even more improbable for him:

> Yet I would lead my grandmother by the hand
> Through much of what she would not understand;
> And so I stumble.

If the young poet could not capture even contentment in his own life, he could hope even less to recapture the lost joy of another's. But although the sound of rain on the attic roof where his grandmother's letters were kept turned to "gently pitying laughter," the poem ends on a note of tender defeat and gentle failure. The laughter mocks his intention more in pity than malice, and the pity is gentle. If Crane had not achieved contentment, he had perhaps found consolation.

The son of a father whom he hate-loved and a mother whom he love-hated, Crane sought but could not find either; he evaded but could not escape either. He would leave home, he would leave Cleveland, he would leave America behind him, but he found distance easier to achieve than detachment. He took with him the name Hart Crane, leaving only his given name and his boyhood behind.

* * *

Crane's subsequent attempts to share love were also scattered, confused, and incomplete. His "manhood" was in bits and pieces, in fragmented images of his father, of himself, and of the men he bedded with. Confining himself almost exclusively to sailors, he combed the docks searching for "ships" that would not pass him in the night. Sometimes wandering the wharfs in frustration for hours that stretched into years, sometimes being beaten up and left in some alley, Crane's eccentric appetite only left him more defeated and empty.

In "The Broken Tower," Crane gave some shape and form to the hollowness within him:

> . . . my long-scattered score
> of broken intervals . . . And I, their sexton slave . . .

Confirmed in his homosexuality, if not fulfilled, Crane lusted for a fuller love:

> And so it was I entered the broken world
> To trace the visionary company of love, its voice
> An instant in the wind . . .

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. . . But not for long to hold each desperate choice.

Peggy Cowley changed all that. For the first time in his life, Crane was able to think of a woman as other than an "auntie," a "nanny," a mother-substitute. For the first time, Crane felt a warmth that could dispel the cold shadow which had overcast his life and clouded his manhood.

As Crane began to piece together his masculine identity, his lyricism reached its climax:

(She) builds, within, a tower that is not stone
. . .-visible wings of silence sown
In azure circles, widening as they dip

The matrix of the heart, lift down the eye
That shines the quiet lake and swells a tower . . .
The commodious, tall decorum of that sky
Unseals her earth, and lifts love in its shower.

The puns on *heart/Hart* and *eye/I* are too plain to miss. In his adolescence, the tower had symbolized, literally and figuratively, Crane's detachment and isolation from women. As a boy in Cleveland, Harold had retreated from the quicksand of bickering and the quagmire of his mother's artful sobbing to his tower bedroom, a refuge that had held him prisoner. Now, with less than a year of life left to him, the tower came to signify new force, new energy, elevating Crane to new heights of poetic power. The tower was no longer "broken," but whole; Crane's manhood was complete.

* * *

Crane's poetry was still, at best, orgiastic. But "The Bridge" was already under construction. Crane was entering his poetic maturity.

Crane took as an analogy for "The Bridge," the Sistine Chapel. This was no mere braggadocio, however. The poet was describing his intention rather than evaluating the result. Crane intended the poem as an organic synthesis. He wished to fuse the fragments of America's past, present, and potential as seen through a single pair of eyes. His goal was to focus the country and the concept of America, the historical moment and momentum, in a single poetic vision.

He wished to show that the American Dream was not a lie but a promise. Although Crane rebelled against his father's provincialism, he was neither a political revolutionary nor, even in the now-fashionable sense, radical, and retained essentially "middle class" values throughout his life. Yet Crane's poetic vision was not the businessman's dream of financial success or the imperialist's dream of power. Crane was captivated, not by America's wealth or armed might, but by her disarming majesty, not only the majesty of her purple mountains but of her promise.

Crane spent his last years fitting, fastening and fusing, attempting once again to weave a pattern from the fabric of his experience. But he did not use the spinning wheel of the weaver; he used the acetylene of a modern blacksmith. Aware of the dimensions and the demands of an epic, Crane clamped, bolted, hinged, braced, and linked. He had become a welder of words. What Eliot's masterpiece gains from footnotes, Crane tried to make part of the poetry.

The frequent flashes of brilliance did not lend themselves readily to a patching process. Even in the early stages, the results of Crane's painstaking efforts more resembled ingenious tapestries than the genius of Michelangelo's ceiling. And as Crane perfected the pearl-like passages, his epic became more mosaic than mural. He seemed more and more to be arranging brightly colored bits of glass rather than weaving tatters into fine cloth. His intended epic seemed to be fragmenting, like his life, before his eyes. It was like trying to arrive at a prearranged pattern by dialing a kaleidoscope; it seemed he could not tamper with one piece of the epic without other pieces falling into new and often unrelated patterns.

The "transitions" that furnish the relationship between vignettes and vision in "The Bridge" were not to be merely of the eye or the hand, but of the mind and the heart, and many of them are indeed among the best lines that Crane ever wrote. Sometimes the transition is associational and incidental, scarcely noticed, or metaphors so tightly compressed that they are better felt than stated, better experienced than explained. Today, Crane is still remembered as a poet of great passages rather than great poems. Crane's achievement may have been lyric, but his vision was truly epic. If Crane did not fully realize his vision, it may have been because his vision was too ambitious, his talent too little, or perhaps because America is too big. The poet's America is often more immense and more immediate than our own. And Hart Crane was, after and above all, a poet.

Had he lived longer, would Crane have gone on to develop his craft and realize his vision, to earn acclaim as a poet of the first magnitude, or was he a minor talent who had already reached his zenith? Such pretentious questions, whether speculated idly upon as with Crane or deliberated somberly as with Keats, are like debating what happens to characters after "The End" of a novel. In the end, we must live with what the poet did, not what he might have done.

The bridge of Hart Crane's vision perhaps cannot be crossed. What is pleasing to the eye may be perilous for the foot. But such is the nature of a myth or dream or vision that spans the distance between what we are and what we hope to be. *Voyager* describes a poet embarked on a journey toward destiny, not arrived at a destination.

If Crane's life tells us something more about the process of poetry, his death remains shrouded in mystery. Only the very weak, or the very strong, select suicide. Perhaps America is not fertile ground for poetic visions; perhaps Crane's attempts to fuse the fragments of his own experience proved futile. When he leapt from the deck of an ocean steamer that April afternoon in 1932, he took leave of a world he perhaps misunderstood as much as it misunderstood him. Precisely why he left this world is forever beyond our reach; what Hart Crane left it is at the fingertips of any who will reach out.

—*Jerry Crisp*

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